

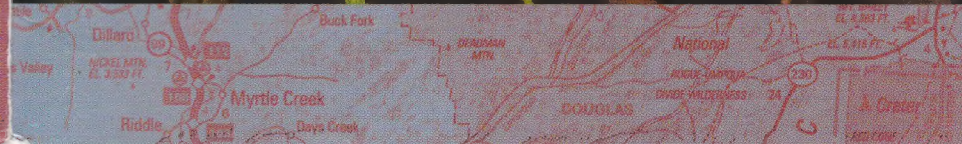
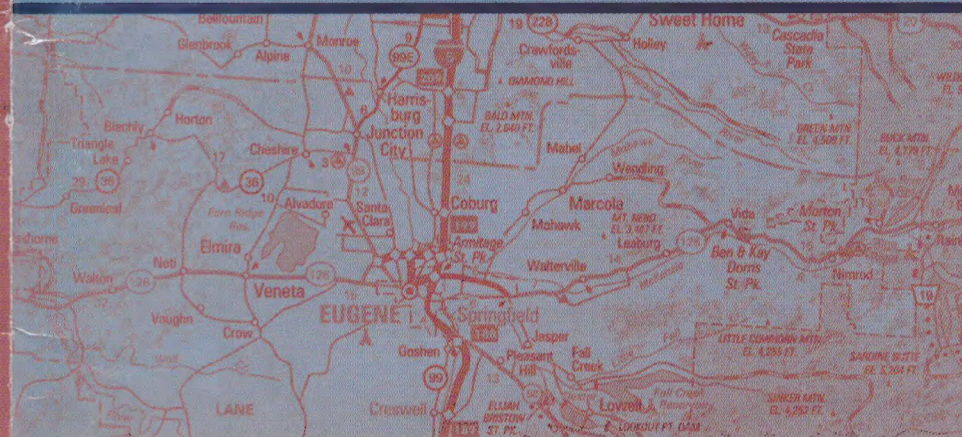
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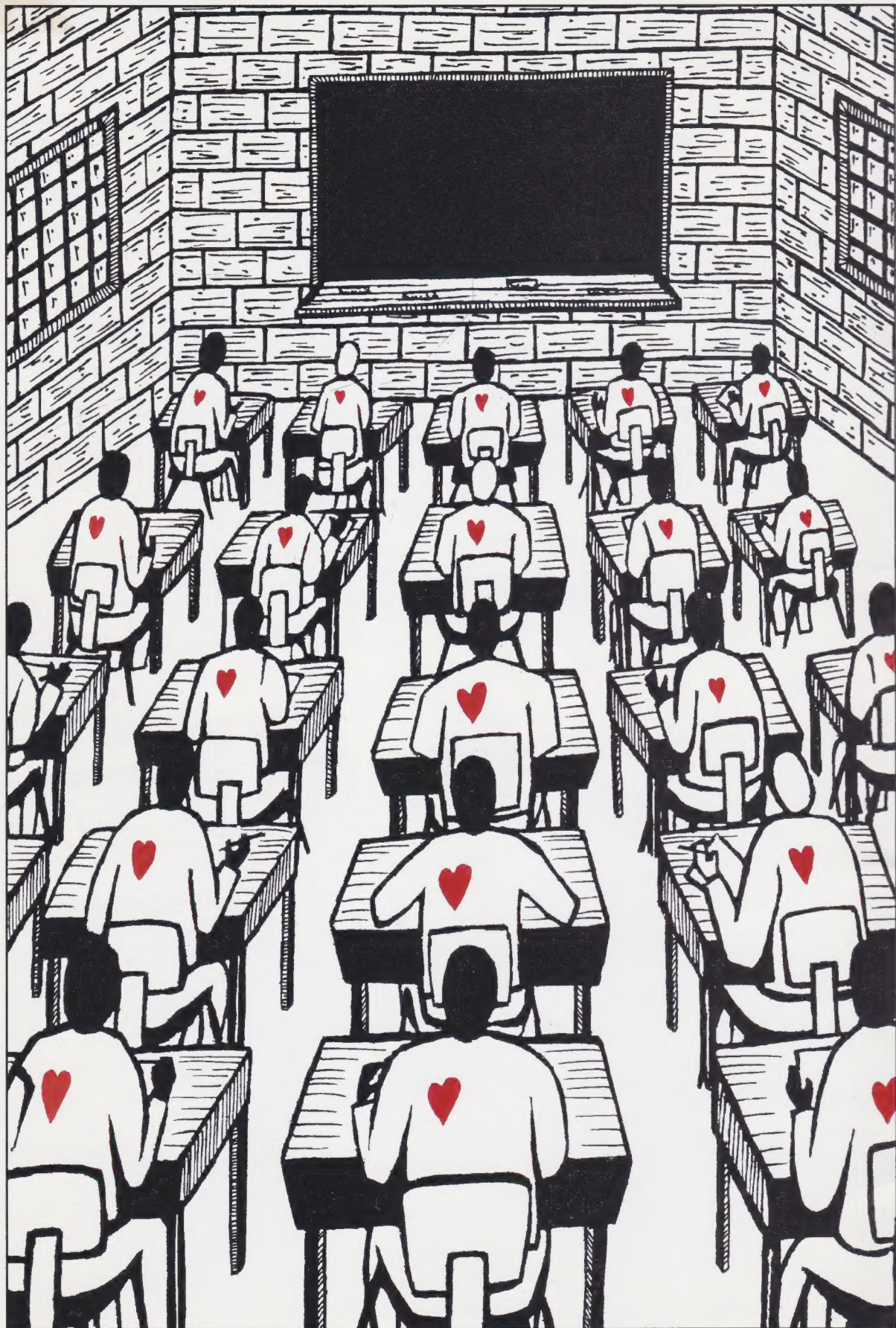
ARSENAL

#2

A Magazine of Anarchist Strategy and Culture

\$4.00





School, Josh MacPhee

Fall 2000

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ARSENAL

a magazine of anarchist
strategy and culture

Issue Two, Fall 2000

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spectrum of anarchist
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From Protest to Resistance

We can protest till death. They won't listen. Don't sit back and think it will happen. They won't give up what they've robbed. Stand up and resist.

In the start all that seemed feasible was to question the house that the State built—its policies, and its governing force, joined by others in unison rejecting State oppression and the way they abuse our earth and its inhabitants. A movement developed...We increased the pressure on them, demonstrated and screamed at its foundations...We asked for peace, they declared war...The time had come to stop screaming at their foundations and start kicking them in: from protest to resistance. "One way or another we will drive our vital message home, that is, we won't let you destroy our world, we have the strength, will organize, and..."

You try working for something the system can't make, creating something that a law can't take back.

—lyrics and notes by Conflict



Or is it really about exacting costs?

Cutting down genetically modified cherry trees with hatchets or dumping bioengineered tea in the nearest harbor directly impacts the pocket book, ego, and press coverage of those who own the orchards and plantations, as well as the centers of distribution and sales. Those who mucked with DNA pay a price. And the action is taken by those who are vulnerable to the enterprise, the people who were themselves treated as commodities and assumed to be without options. The action and its message are strong and direct: this is about us and our lives and we won't let you do it.

If activists in London or New York shut down the stock exchange for even one day or one hour the costs in dollars and publicity may be even higher. The activists usually have more choices about what they are exposed to and impacted by, about how they make their living and what they eat. The action, however powerful, is indirect and symbolic.

Eugene anarchists destroying genetically modified crops have

moved from protest to resistance. Anarchists in San Francisco's Mission District attacking gentrifiers have moved from protest to resistance. No appeal for concessions is made to those in power. This strategic shift, abandoning symbolic protest to struggle and resist is like a turn-around in soccer where a defensive play becomes an attack on the goal. Score. The attacked fight back. Successfully.

Activists are inspired by the sentiments of Conflict's lyrics and the examples of anarchists who go on the attack. It is a thrill to act and score. Even more fields and yuppies pay a price. But without work that develops significant connections between these acts of resistance and long-term, serious strategies that resonate with a large number of people, no movement develops. Nothing is sustained, however comforting the resulting punk, neo-primitivist and other 'drop out' communities may be. Like the Diggers who claimed the commons, activists are easily discovered, isolated and picked off by the State. Those inspired end up devoting their energy to jail support, fund-raising, or

waiting for the next motivating crisis—WTO meeting, Gulf War, Klan rally, etc. Those demoralized by the loss do nothing. The revolution is not right around the corner. Most of the time its not even on the map.

There are other ways of settling the score that also help develop a strong, vital and responsive movement. Declarations of victory and territory and the build up of considerable support can occur with symbolic protest and, by contrast, with the type of direct struggle exemplified by the KRRS (Karnataka State Farmers' Movement) in India and the Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil. It is possible that the actions of the Eugene anarchists and the Mission Yuppie Eradication Project will become building blocks of a mass action. It won't happen by accident.

What will make the difference getting to tomorrow's revolution—today, is strategic work, debate that indicates our distinct politics, and a living culture capable of anticipating opportunity. Developing cohesive strategy, building bold and provocative organizations, taking action radical enough to be meaningful and acceptable enough to make allies will make a movement. The alternative? Fads: movements without organizations. Reformism: organizations that don't build movements. Media stunts: direct actions without ideas. Intellectual posturing: ideas without actions. The alternative of isolated thrills—watching and reading about the Black Bloc and claiming some distant association, engaging exclusively in disjointed and symbolic actions such as the continuing series from J18 to N30, A16, M1 and R2K/D2K, limiting

politics to glibly recited slogans that are then adopted by liberals engaged in bigger and better symbolic actions—is enough to drive strategic-minded anarchists all the way to Oregon.

"Freedom is the demand that will turn the world upside down."

There is plenty for anarchists to do if we want an anarchist movement. We need to learn how to be part of a movement. We need to clarify our politics and scrutinize our results. Is our activism anarchist? Does it practice what it preaches? Is it building consciously toward revolution? Can we remain committed to our current activism and also work toward our own movement? How do we cultivate a culture that draws people together, a culture that sustains us? For us and those we hope will join, we need to answer these questions.

Anarchists must get serious about politics and action. Action is important—so is the work to build a base in a dynamic and long-term movement. It is important to draw some lines and take positions based on politics and issues, not on who likes who, who wears a circle A on their sleeve, who does the most 'work.' Strategic anarchists must challenge the state and other enemies through culture, counter-organizing of potential constituencies and defensive action. Strategic anarchism is organized but not inflexible, consistent without being predictable. Strategic anarchism does have boundaries—and that is not a bad thing. Strategic anarchism is smart, analytical, critical, dynamic, strong, convincing. Strategic anarchism is uncontrollable but not wild, intentional but not fixed, reasonable but not

ARSENAL

Resisting Global Capitalism

In recent years the KRRS (Karnataka State Farmer's Movement in southern India) has physically dismantled — with iron bars — a Cargill seed unit, trashed another office of the same multinational agribusiness, burned Monsanto's field trials of biotech cotton, and trashed a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Bangalore. Their actions put in some perspective the recent debate about so-called "violence against property" in Seattle.

— Jaggi Singh,
Vancouver-based activist



Arsenal enthusiast at the 2000 San Francisco
Anarchist Bookfair

staid. Strategic anarchism develops leadership but not hierarchy. Strategic anarchism has a lineage and continuity but is not archaic or static.

Our future includes more than organizing for the next Super Event (N30, A16, M1, S26, etc.) where our opposition is responding more quickly with resources that will overwhelm us. With fantastic interest and growth in anarchism is plenty of new problems and new potential. Opportunities will be lost if our growing numbers and energy is lost in repeated mistakes. Post-Ruckus tactics will build an insurgent atmosphere everywhere. Our renewed strategies will clarify our principles and distinguish our communities. We can do it. The question is, will we?

*Words and writings
were all nothing and
must die. Because
action is the life of all.
And if you do not act
you do nothing. All men
have stood for freedom.
Plenty of petitions and
promises have been
made for freedom...We
are all like men in the
mist seeking for free-
dom and knowing not
where or how. Freedom
is the demand that
will turn the world
upside down.*

—Gerard Winstanley,
*The New Law of
Righteousness*

¡Salud!
The Arsenal Collective

Business

Arsenal

We present content that contributes to anarchist work in the areas of Community, Organization, Connections, Campaigns, Culture and Images. We work to develop anarchism in strategically viable directions through discussion of what is and what could be.

In Issue #1, we did a poor job with Keith Graham's terrific photographs of Seattle. We also misspelled the following names: Josh MacPhee, Keith Graham, and Sue Simensky Bietila. Nicholas Lampert was left off of the *This Isn't Working* print credit.

Rob the Rich

Arsenal #1 also included a review of Rob the Rich, a pamphlet by Rob los Ricos aka Robert Thaxton. To order copies of this and other pamphlets, contribute to the legal support team for Rob, and to get in touch with anarchist prisoner Rob Thaxton, write to Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous POB 11331 Eugene OR 97440. Any mail sent to us for Rob or requesting copies of the pamphlet will be forwarded to AAA.

Mail

Arsenal will publish all letters-to-the-editors and other correspondence on our web site if they meet the following conditions:

- Take a position. Debate. Talk about the content. Say something interesting. We do not intend to publish "We like your magazine. Send ten copies to..." however much we appreciate that sort of mail.
- Letters longer than one hand-written page must be typed, on white and ideally single-sided paper using a font that our OCR software will recognize (i.e. times, helvetica, etc.)
- Handwritten letters must be legible.
- Super long and/or sloppy letters will be included if we can find someone willing to type them. When they will not be included, we will note the gist of the content and send a copy to anyone who wants it.
- Letters must be signed and include a return address that we can publish. We don't care if you sign it with a pseudonym.

Our responses will be sent directly to the letter writers and will not be published. We stand by the content of Arsenal. Articles, artwork, and reviews are published because they contribute to the goals of Arsenal magazine. However, we welcome debate, criticism, and of course corrections. Copies of our responses to letters are available by request.

RED CARD!!!



This Police Officer gets a well deserved Red Card for her performance during a Chicago May Day 2000 rally—hand ball in the penalty box, theft of a soccer ball, and all around "unsporting conduct!"

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FIGHTING WORDS

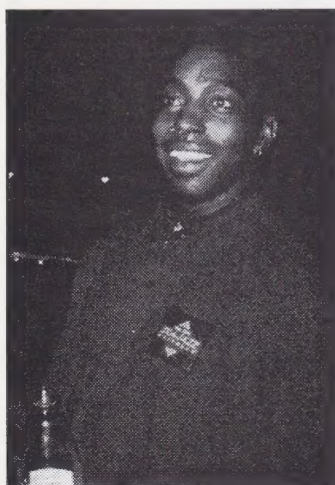
by Marie Falcone

What is ARA?

Anti-Racist Action is a growing movement of people dedicated to exposing, opposing and confronting racism in both its far-right and institutional forms through education, action and support of broader anti-racist struggles.



Dan Shersty



Lin "Spit" Newborn

Anti-Racist Action (ARA) is facing some urgent and tough questions about its anti-fascist work. How these are dealt with and what decisions are made will determine the potency of that work. These decisions will determine ARA's influence within the developing anti-capitalist, direct action movement and its ability to survive the consequences of current activity. Frankly evaluating ARA's project of direct confrontation with members of fascist groups is a crucial first step.

ARA has a history of confronting fascists. In fact, the first point of unity indicates a confrontational attitude and activity. As much as I like that, several problems are becoming apparent:

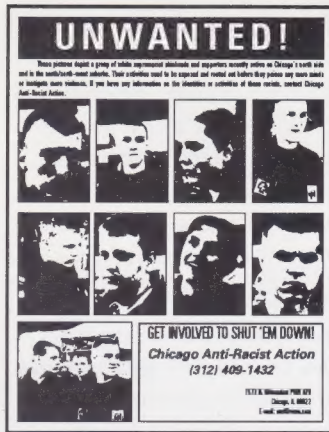
- 1) Fascists fight back;
- 2) Arrests/greater charges/lengthy sentences are increasingly likely; and
- 3) Risk that physical confrontation becomes the totality of the project and the group becomes militarized.

Fascists Fight Back

The murders of Newborn and Shersty in Las Vegas and the beating in Louisville (see sidebars) prove that not all fascists will run for the shitter when met by an ARA unwelcoming committee. While I'm not arguing that all confrontations between

ARA and fascists will result in death or beating, retaliation is always a possibility. It's not clear to me that ARA accepts this. Whether this stems from wishful thinking or not knowing how to deal with the difficult ramifications, I don't really know. By not taking this into account, though, ARA sets itself up for more major problems.

When reality comes crashing down, it becomes clear that ARA's second point of unity doesn't guide much of anything. Without diminishing the tragedy of the murders and understanding the outrage and simultaneous helplessness ARA comrades feel, the ARA Las Vegas response is, at the very least, reliance on the cops and the courts. Their newspaper ad states: "It is unacceptable that police and prosecutors have charged only one man, and allowed a conspiracy of racist killers to get away with murder." "Call the Las Vegas authorities today and tell them to act." "Is this justice?" I know ARA is made up of multiple political tendencies and levels of experience, but that doesn't excuse this response. What should ARA's response be? Is ARA prepared to retaliate in a substantive way? How can the group as a whole prepare for and defend themselves against the inevitable fascist attacks? What if the fascists turned the table and started "outing" ARA members?



Expose & Confront campaign flyer
by Chicago ARA

Cumulative Risks

Chicago ARA has had an on-going project of exposing and directly confronting members and/or sympathizers of the World Church of the Creator in their homes and neighborhoods. This activity is both an organizing tool and an effort to deal with ARA's internal pacifist tendencies. It has been carried out very openly. They organize a leafleting of the targeted neighborhood and then go to the house of the wcotc member. Even though arrests and charges have increased with each action, no one here is facing a lengthy sentence. Most charges were dropped or settled as misdemeanors. That will likely change if ARA continues this project. Some ARA members are now known to law enforcement, and a continuing determination to engage the fascists is a basis for pre-emptive arrests at the very least. We have to assume that our faces, names and addresses are known to the fascists, too.

Militarization Risk

What if these ARA outings were carried out much more anonymously and secretly? An obvious problem is that there would no longer be a way for everyone to participate and therefore ARA wouldn't adequately involve new people in militant activity. When a group attempts to carry out both open and covert actions, even military planning and preparation tend to make any public militancy risky. Functioning clandestinely is not any guarantee of avoiding the legal hassles either. Just check history for the evidence.

If we need a model that avoids dealing with political questions and focuses on physically attacking nazis, Red Action in England serves that purpose. Red Action claims that while working within Anti-Fascist Action they have made it impossible for nazis to hold demos, concerts or even leaflet. They argue that the right-wing activists have been reduced to either running for local/national office or functioning clandestinely.

There's no denying that what Red Action says and particularly what they do is attractive. However, there are some problems that are relevant to ARA. There is a fascist resurgence throughout Europe. Would Red Action have us believe it's because there just aren't enough tough guys beating the shit out of the nazis anywhere but in England?

Murder in the Desert

On July 4, 1998, the body of Daniel Shersty, a white man in the Air Force, was discovered in the desert—badly beaten and shot. Two days later, the body of Lin "Spit" Newborn, a black professional body piercer, was found 150 yards away—shot in the back.

Spit and Dan were best friends and members of Anti-Racist Action Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Unity Skins. Committed to fighting fascism and opposing racists in the streets. They were lured into the desert and assassinated by a group of local neo-nazis. Their murder was a blow to Las Vegas ARA—many members of the group left the state or went into hiding in fear for their lives. A month after the killing, ARA held a memorial and march for Spit and Dan. ARA Las Vegas said "They want to get rid of us first, because we're the street-level opposition. If they beat us, you're going to see a wave of hate crimes in Las Vegas."

At this time, only one neo-nazi is being tried for the murders—even though mounting evidence indicates many more nazis were involved. ARA's response to the trial has been to run an ad in a Las Vegas newspaper to educate the public about the situation, and to plead that justice be served.

FIGHTING WORDS

I have to politically and factually question their claim that they've driven the nazis off the streets. Unless their publications and websites are totally fabricated, fascists do seem to be functioning openly in England and not just in terms of running for office. In fact some of them report on the clashes with Red Action. Even if the street actions of some fascists have been curtailed, it's not necessarily the result of Red Action's hard work. The right wing is comprised of various political tendencies. Some groups lean toward electoral politics and some head for clandestinity—just like on the left. To claim victory when the British National Party runs for office is shallow—it's their politics.

While they currently express righteous and utter contempt for the traditional left, Red Action knowingly serves as the "shock troops" for their demos, etc. That allows the entrenched left to avoid responsibility for violent street action, even to disavow it, but to still get the benefits from having nazis sent running and bleeding

from their pathetic demos. Allowing it to appear as if fascism is being defeated politically by those whose politics clearly won't ever defeat anything is a political evasion and undermines our organizing potential.

The admitted flow of ex-nazis into Red Action (and we should probably assume the reverse is also true) indicates a political weakness. While I'm not questioning Red Action's commitment to anti-racist politics, I do question whether people are attracted on the basis of physical fighting ability rather than political agreement.

Finally, the police can heavily determine the outcome of any serious and prolonged street battle between fascists and anti-fascists. They can allow it, stop it, pre-empt it and decide who "wins" it. Even implicit cooperation with the police will quickly become a political liability, allowing the fascists to reap the political rewards of being "against the system."

Conflicts and contradictions within capitalism create the



Chicago ARA banner on display during a Chicago Fire soccer game

basis for revolution—rightwing and leftwing. As conditions change, so do strategies for revolt. When “fighting fascism” revolves around physical/military attacks, victories are momentary while the threat is perpetual. It’s critical that anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist activists have an accurate assessment of current fascist tendencies and strategies. We have to address their strengths as

well as their weak points, and in the process challenge ourselves to develop and implement a substantial alternative.



Four Principles of ARA

1. TIARA intends to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, anti-choice zealotry, discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest, the poorest and the most disenfranchised of our society. We intend to win!

2. WE GO WHERE THEY GO.

Wherever fascists are organizing or active, we're there. Ignoring a problem doesn't mean the problem no longer exists. In order to solve it, it has to first be confronted. For this reason, we are committed to ensuring that bigots and terrorists never feel safe to operate openly in our communities. We will never let the nazi have the streets!

3. WE DON'T RELY ON THE COPS OR THE COURTS.

This doesn't mean that we rule out using the legal system to achieve our goals. But when the legal and policing institutions themselves are clearly corrupted by racism, how can we trust them to do what's right? We understand that we must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and our communities and to stop the fascists.

4. NON-SECTARIAN DEFENCE OF OTHER ANTI-RACISTS.

ARA chapters across the globe, consist of lots of different groups and individuals. We don't agree on everything and we have a right to differ openly. This diversity of opinion is our strength, enabling us to work together with people of all different backgrounds, experiences and viewpoints to combat hatred.

Nazis Attack Louisville ARA

In response to nazi activity, Louisville ARA posted notices around the neighborhood with photos and names of the neo-nazi Derby City Skins.

On June 10, a week after the flyers went up, six members and friends of Louisville ARA were circled by carloads of nazi skin-heads. Between 10–15 of the nazis got out of their cars. The ARA members and friends ran.

Jadon Welke, friend to several ARA members, was caught and severely beaten. He says that as he was being kicked, one attacker exclaimed “That’s for your flyer.” Jadon, who had nothing to do with the flyers, is now suffering from multiple facial fractures, loss of vision in his right eye (possibly permanent), and medical bills exceeding \$7,500.

The attackers threatened that they would go after Louisville ARA’s “headquarters” next. The nazis reportedly walk the street publicly without opposition. The leader of the Derby City Skins has said “To me, this (ARA action) has gotten way out of hand. It’s to the point where I think it might end hard out in the streets.” In the meantime, Jadon Welke is pressing charges. “I did nothing to deserve this,” he says.

ASK A FALLEN COMRADE

Dear Ricardo,

Gotta tell ya, I'm about ready to give up on this revolution shit. Here's the deal: I hear about it in college, right. After my girlfriend started making me eat tahini she made me sign up for this class on Greenism with her that a couple of seniors were teaching. They weren't like real professors, it was cool, we drank coffee in class and they didn't care. The girl teacher always brought in these slammin' vegan cookies she made. So I learned all this rad stuff, like how we're proletariats and oppressed by capitalism, and alienated, and how we need a revolution to clear it all up. It was pretty different from high school, on account of History was my first period and I missed the classes on the Revolutionary War when I guess they went over this stuff.

Anyway, this is why I'm about to give up on it. My girlfriend gets so fired up by Greenism after that class, right, that we've got to leave school and move to this midwestern city that nobody would want to live in, I say, except they've got a "scene" there, she says. So we move and go to meetings but the revolution isn't happening there. We have to pack up and move again and "check out the scene" there. This new place is even colder. And from the meetings I've been to here I don't think the revolution is coming up around the bend or anything here either.

All I know is I used to be happy until this revolution thing got a

hold of my life. I'm as down with it as the next guy, but it seems to be taking forever. Plus my dad is going to be hella mad when he finds out I dropped out of college.

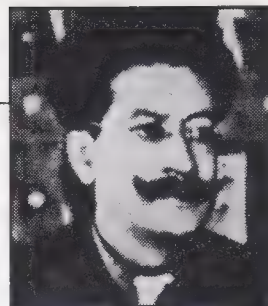
Thanks man,
Revolution Now

Dear RN,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. My correspondence with those on the outside was my sustenance during my many years in prison, when, as a captive, I could give not more to the revolution than letters and love sent to comrades. And only three letters a week. Censored. Anyway, it's heartening to know that my dreams and my visions live on. Thanks, thanks.

On to your plight. I understand you as one exile does another. In flight, unable to create a permanent domicile, deprived of your work, for no other reason than you're a person with dreams. A revolutionary is a dreamer, and the dreamer is the designer of tomorrow. That you suffer? Those without dreams, enamored of the governmental machine, bent before their bosses, worshipping material success, they will say with a shrug: "Whatever."

Not I. As your comrade I challenge you: find contentment in being a dreamer. Find contentment in sowing seeds. Temper your frustration with this fact—no one can make a revolution: it is a social phenomenon. I saw one happen, you may not. The important thing is to cherish our vision of humanity



Ricardo Flores Magon

living in a peace assured by the suppression of this fountain of all evils—the right of private property.

Alternatively, dump your girlfriend. If you want a master, you may elect one, but your emancipation must be your own work. Can't help you there.

Tierra y Libertad,
Reforma, Libertad, y Justicia!
Against Capital, Authority
and the Church!
Mexicans: Death to Authority!

Ricardo Flores Magón

Next issue

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

BRINGING THE STRUGGLE HOME

By Richard Van Savage

The anarchist/autonomist community has traditionally struggled with what role to play in regard to "national liberation" movements. Is it a contradiction to be an internationalist working with an indigenous movement? Is it a contradiction to be in favor of community-based autonomy and to be working in another community? Fortunately the EZLN have been struggling with these same questions and experimenting with unique solutions. Their position is that everyone has a role to play in the revolution. The point of this essay is to argue that we can learn a lot from them and can bring the struggle home.

The Zapatistas welcome the help of anyone, up to a point. They have set up a variety of ways for others to be in touch with them. There are strict limits and one should be clear from the outset that the EZLN (Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional) are not interested in outsiders coming down to pick up a gun or farm some milpa. So if you're entertaining such fantasies, get over them, or look for another movement. They have set up a number of official conduits so that your money or efforts reach the Zapatistas. The FZLN (Frente Zapatista Liberacion Nacional) and Enlace Civil are just two of the better known public contacts.

Autonomist Strategy

Autonomy is a word kicked around quite a bit in the Zapatista struggle and is worth considering



Portrait of Marcos made with beans, rice and chiles by Jenny Scholten

in greater detail. In its basic essence, it is the antithesis of dependency. We can evaluate all of our projects in light of whether they further dependent relationships or autonomy. We can ask ourselves if we are working to undermine such dependent relationships or if through tacit consent, we're working against our stated beliefs and are being hypocrites.

From the personal we can begin to build community (common-unity) with others. If we are morally bankrupt, liars, cheaters, etc. then what sort of common-unity are we in fact building? Collectively owned houses or

BRINGING THE STRUGGLE HOME

squats, collective businesses, schools, etc. begin to take us out of the neo-liberal system of exploitation. At some point our collective community efforts will begin to form a counter-power that challenges the powers-that-be. There will inevitably be a clash between the two forms of social organization. Counter-power is essentially a matrix structure, a network of nodes, collectives and individuals built around communication and democracy. The power of the status quo is founded on hierarchies, authority, obedience and enforced marginalization, through a system that values the accumulation of capital and property. At the point where power clashes with counter-power we have class war and if we are well-organized, revolution. A hierarchy built upon a base that refuses to support it will collapse, though it may need a little help falling down.

Dignity as a Base

I would be doing a grave disservice to anyone interested in doing solidarity work by not talking a little bit about dignity. It's a bit of a truism that if we begin to do something truly significant politically then we are going to come under some sort of observation and possible attack by the authorities of the United States. If we're going to survive the attacks that come from the authorities and also from unexpected corners, from former friends, lovers and compas, then we need to be strongly rooted. I'm not talking about a strong sense of guilt, or some dogmatic belief in the inevitability of the revolution. What is it that is going to keep us going when everything goes to shit? When I started raising money for the Zapatistas I sud-

denly found myself under attack and quite frankly it almost broke me. What kept me going was a very strong internal belief system, where dignity, self respect and integrity played a far larger role than ideology.

There are Zapatistas right now dying of hunger strikes in prison, who are being ambushed in the middle of the night, who are having their houses and all their belongings burned to the ground. All the while the media talks of a democracy in Mexico. I'm not talking about 1994, I'm talking about right now as you read these words. The media romance with the Zapatistas has passed to some other hot spot, but the revolution and struggle for dignity have not. One reason the struggle here is as strong as it is, is because it is not dependent on the media and outside support.

What to do and How

The question that then arises is what we ought to do, both in regards to our international solidarity efforts as well as in regards to our movements at home. Why not use the solidarity movement as a learning process for building our own revolutionary movement? Five primary areas of solidarity work as well as building any militant organization are:

- 1) Consciousness raising,
- 2) Civil Disobedience,
- 3) Direct Action and Sabotage,
- 4) Logistics and
- 5) Organizing.

Consciousness Raising

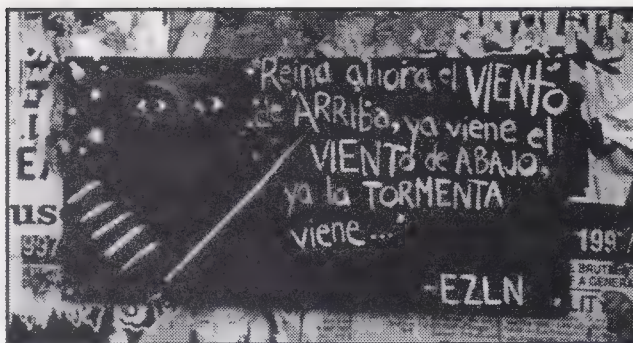
Consciousness raising is a long-term process of educating people and eventually changing one's own culture. If we think of culture as something we produce collectively as a community then we

have to take over the means of production of our own culture and write our own her/history. This does not happen overnight and I would recommend the works of Paulo Freire as a guide. His books contain a lifetime of revolutionary wisdom and will provide a revealing insight into the base communities that form the heart and soul of the Zapatista struggle.

Civil Disobedience and Protest

Civil disobedience is something many have reduced to civil *obedience*. If the cops say, "do this or that then you will be arrested," and then you go and do that, then you are in fact obeying the cops and engaging in a form of resistance they find quite acceptable and profitable. (Wonder what a cop on demo duty is making in overtime!) We shouldn't take pride in there being 500 arrests in Philly (at the Republican National Convention), we should be asking, why were there any at all? We should be asking, if labor didn't show up in Philly then how can we work with labor at the job/strike site? To paraphrase Saul Alinsky, we must go outside the experience of the enemy. We must constantly be one step ahead of the enemy. We must operate on our own terms. Operating on the enemy's terms and turf will result in defeat.

There are many times when candle-light vigils, sitting down in the streets and blocking traffic don't do jack. There are also times when such actions are incredibly powerful. What is the difference? What is the context necessary to make such tactics a success, and how do we build that context? When 300 police came in and took over an autonomous municipal



Street installation in Chicago
by Micah Bizant
and Josh Macphee

office, the next day (without phones or advance notice) the Zapatistas mobilized 4000 unarmed Zapatistas who non-violently expelled the police. There were zero arrests or injuries.

Direct Action and Sabotage

A third form of solidarity is sabotage and direct action. While the Zapatistas gained world-wide headlines in 1994 by taking over six cities, they gained far more materially in 1995 when they took over millions of acres of farmland. The army and media were so

We must go outside the experience of the enemy.

busy looking for guerrillas that the action caught them off guard. Others sat around waiting for elections and politicians to deliver some sort of Agrarian Reform, but as the Zapatistas say, why reduce democracy to a single vote? Why wait when collectively we can achieve through direct action that which is fair and just?

Likewise the Zapatistas have become a leading voice in the world-wide movement against neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism causes suffering and death through enforced marginalization and deprivation of available resources. How then are we going to counter this white-washed wholesale murder that is taking

place? One way is to remove the tools being used to enslave. Sabotage is a non-violent method of countering the use of the accumulated property as a tool to exploit others. Many people in the world today have an illness that puts more value on property than on the living. We must do the opposite. When property is being used to harm living beings we must do what we can to redistribute that property without, in turn, harming other living beings. We should take special care when doing direct action or carrying out sabotage that we take a preferential option for non-violence.

Sabotage can be either symbolic or economic. If we're going to do sabotage it makes sense that it should have a real economic impact in reconfiguring the bottom line. Neo-liberalism will end when it is too costly to continue. We should be clear with ourselves what the goal is and not confuse

sives to take out bridges when the army moved in. This action was used as a tactic in a larger strategic picture. As with civil disobedience we must ask ourselves what is the appropriate context for such actions and how do we build that context? If your action needs a communiqué then it probably wasn't very well thought out. Action in solidarity with the EZLN ought to speak for itself and contribute positively to The Organization.

It's very easy to confuse tactics with strategy and this may merit a bit more clarification. I will use the antifascist movement as an example. How does antifascist work tie into overthrowing the government? It's the same sort of question we must ask ourselves if we're doing direct action in the solidarity movement. It'd be easy to simply carry out a number of acts of sabotage and action against fascist targets but these are essentially tactical maneuvers and need an overall plan as to how they're going to build up to something that brings down the fascist movement. In other words, is the strategy to use direct action to call media attention to the criminality of the fascists? Is the strategy to expropriate material resources from the right and deliver them to the left? Is it to defeat them militarily before they have a chance to operate against the left?

In regards to solidarity work, our action ought to be carried out paralleled to the group we're doing solidarity with. In the same way that struggles previously (FMLN, URNG, FSLN, etc.) created coordinating committees to carry out the struggle, the new worldwide struggle against neo-liberalism will require decentralized action



Street installation in Chicago
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breaking a window with true economic damage against a multinational. Likewise with arson or bombings—we shouldn't confuse putting a pipe bomb or car bomb in front of a building with armed struggle. These are tactics. When used as a strategy they are counter productive or even terrorist. Used as tactics in a larger strategy, they are not.

The Zapatistas have used explo-

taking place simultaneously and coordinated amongst groups all over the world (as in Reclaim the Streets). What capacity do we have to hit multinationals and the government if there is a military crackdown in Chiapas? If our actions are devoid of a local context then we've already lost sight of the fight for our own autonomy. A concrete example: At the time of this writing the workers at VW are talking about going on strike here in Mexico. If they do, then what can we do locally to assist the workers? How can we also do work in solidarity that is at the same time organizing locally? By putting our actions in such a strategic context we build the revolutionary capacity to bring multinationals to their knees, while simultaneously building our own local autonomy.

Logistics

Logistics involves acquiring necessary materials and getting them from point A to point B. I will focus on the work of acquiring resources. Some groups resort to expropriations and kidnappings, others to selling drugs. Such groups more often than not have no popular support or soon lose it.

How can we build a grassroots funding source? It's very difficult to say the least. The Zapatistas ask every sympathizer to contribute 7% to The Organization. If you figure a five-day work week, that comes out to 17 days a year that one works to contribute to the struggle. So then why are so many in the US hesitant to contribute even one day of pay? Why are so many fundraisers afraid to ask for at least a days wages? This is a mistake I've seen time and time again. If we don't ask we

won't receive.

The anarchist movement seems to have a fear or hatred of money that borders on the irrational. While some may in fact want to

By donating a war-tax to build up autonomous infrastructure you can contribute substantially to undermining the current world order.

do away with capital it seems to me the real problem with neo-liberalism is that we have to fight to take control over that capital we produce. By donating a war-tax to build up autonomous infrastructure you can contribute substantially to undermining the current world order. At the same time we mustn't reduce donations to the purely economic, in the same way that the wealth we produce surely isn't limited to the economic sphere. Many who are unable to contribute financially may be able to contribute labor or contacts to those who do have money.

Start with people you know well who have confidence in you. Then with that list, start with those who are working and ask for a day's pay. If you don't know what they earn in a day, then guess. From there, ask each if they know of anyone else who might kick down. Build your list and keep it private (use Pretty Good Privacy—PGP). One technique I used for doing public benefits is to focus fundraising events on having fun. People will spend twenty bucks without thinking for a night of music, but start lecturing them and you'll not only bore them, you'll be lucky to get five bucks out of them. I targeted groups already doing work in the community and asked them if they'd donate their time to doing one benefit a year. In this way I was

BRINGING THE STRUGGLE HOME

able to work with many different people and groups and not simply hitting up the same old folks over and over. It also allowed me to build up the private list as I made new contacts.

There are some basic rules of thumb I can offer as advice. Don't spend a penny of what you fundraise on yourself. Your travel, hotels, food, all that must come out of your own pocket. If you're not willing to bust your ass working to make your project happen then why should someone else bust their ass at work to support you? Integrity is critical to future success. Confidence isn't something that comes automatically, it's something you have to work hard to gain. You can start by doing what you say you're going to do. If you're going to buy something with the money then show them what their money bought. Feedback is important. If it's a project, pick just one and make it happen. Document it and then show the pictures, etc to those who funded it, or better yet form a brigade so they too can participate in making it happen. If people are going to give you hundreds or even thousands of dollars there can't be a shred of doubt that you're going to do what you say. You must always be accountable to your donor base. At the same time you have to be accountable to The Organization. You cannot promise things you cannot deliver or you will burn your ass. Always give credit where it's due. Those who try to control everything eventually burn themselves as well. Some who help you out will eventually have their own contacts. If you've given them credit all along then you both are stronger for it.

Organizing the Organization

Organizing implies building up an organization. How is that organization structured? What is the decision making process of that organization? Where is it rooted? Is it community based or ideologically based? Is it going to be clandestine or public? If both, how will the two sides relate to one another? I would highly recommend the pamphlets from the Movement without Land in Brazil, *How to Organize Base Communities*. Those pamphlets say everything better than I could. Refer to them.

Summary

The anarchist/autonomist movement has been one of the most supportive of the Zapatista struggle within the left. Still, we've done very little compared to solidarity movements of the 1980s. If we expect to be a viable alternative to liberals, religious folks or the Marxist left we need to devote a lot more effort to building up our own infrastructure as well as sister movements such as the Zapatistas. If we hope to develop our own autonomous movement, organization and counter-power then we can learn a tremendous amount from groups like the Zapatistas. They've been highly successful in terms of consciousness raising, civil disobedience, direct action, logistics and organizing. While there are many more things we will need to do, these are critical things that we can learn while doing solidarity work to build our own autonomy.

On the MOVE, la lucha sigue!

FSU PDQ

A LOOK AT EUGENE'S ANARCHISTS

by Laura Buddendeck

In a time when activists seem to be feeling more and more disconnected from each other and the movement in general, wondering who, if anybody, is really "doing something," and just what that something is really accomplishing, the number of discouraged, disillusioned activists seems to be growing. Rifts in organized groups, boredom with the run-of-the-mill protest scene, and a growing dissatisfaction with the all too subtle results of our efforts set the stage for change...and along came the WTO. There's no need to summarize the well publicized events of last November, except to say that few anarchists were anything but inspired and

amazed by the striking reminder of what we can accomplish when we take action. So amazed in fact, that we wondered ourselves how it happened.

Somewhere in the frantic alternative and mass media coverage of the upheaval, amidst the jumble of terms including "black clad youth", "window smashing anarchists," and "face masks," came the phrase "The Eugene Anarchists." Not just a name, but a class, a street gang, a formal indictment. Someone had to be held responsible for the mayhem, and one group conveniently fit the profile. They had a record, (what might even qualify as the beginnings of a pattern), a reputation (in the Northwest), proximity to



Graphic from Disorderly Conduct (Summer 2000)

Timeline of Anarchist Activism in Eugene

60's-70's

Back-to-the-land movement brings drop-outs and others to Oregon. Radical fringe of the anti-war movement centered on University campus. ROTC buildings on campus are burned. Banks in downtown Eugene targeted.

1993

Earth First! Journal locates in Eugene.

1995

Warner Creek Campaign mounted to protect area designated as the Clark Timber Sale. Timber that is not part of the sale is burned (arson). Proposal is made to salvage-log the land after the fire. Road blockade lasts for more than a year. Campaign is victorious—logging in the area is halted. This brings together activists in Eugene and spawns several other forest campaigns in the area through 1996.

1995

Icky's Tea House, a gathering place for radical activists, opens in the Whiteacre neighborhood. Police presence increases in the area.

1996

Resist and Exist gathering takes place. Police presence increases noticeable

the action, and a motive. So the blame game began and Eugene, Oregon, more specifically, Eugene Anarchists (EA) became the sole culprits behind every smashed window, every dented car, every broken sign, every bit of graffiti. From that moment on, the spotlight was on Eugene, and many anarchists in the small town willingly accepted it hoping to start a dialogue that was in their opinion long overdue.

Anarchy was on the front page of nearly every major paper in the country and serving as its mouthpiece, were the real, live anarchists of Eugene. Somehow, through all the interviews, articles, even a piece on *60 Minutes II*, they remained a vague grouping at best, only willing to divulge obscure bits of information couched in slogans

and oversimplified generalities, their motto: FUCKSHITUP.

More than a year after it all began, the same questions are still being asked: who are the "Eugene Anarchists" and what are they really about?

Estimates suggest there are about 100 active and non-active

anarchists in Eugene, a city of approximately 150,000. The anarchist make-up is predominantly white, the vast majority of participants between the ages of 15 and 30. Most have moved to Eugene from other cities across the country, some from California and Washington, others from as far away as Texas, Pennsylvania, and New York. A few originate from Oregon and far fewer from Eugene itself. There is a significant transient element to the population—individuals who come, stay for a few months doing activism, and move on. No one, not even the Eugene folks themselves, seems to understand the reason for the draw to the small town set in the hills of Oregon. Some speculate it has to do with Eugene's individualist histo-



... and Western Civilization!

Graphic from Disorderly Conduct (Summer 2000)

ry and reputation as a liberal college town. Others suspect ecological issues such as the logging industry, politicized the town and made it a ripe environment for groups like Earth First!, who moved their journal operation to Eugene in 1993. The activists who have settled here come from a variety of backgrounds, but seem to have coalesced under the lens of Green Anarchy.

I talked about the recent focus on Eugene with one local anarchist who goes by the name Rottin'. He explained his idea of Green Anarchy and the movement calling it "the purest form of anarchy" because it eliminates the tyranny of humans over nature. Unlike the religious context in which some have characterized it, Green Anarchy does not mean subjecting humans to "the will of nature," Rottin' explains. Instead, humans are considered equal to all things in nature. Rottin' roughly equates Green Anarchy with Primitivism (as explained in the writings of John Zerzan), although he is hesitant to the word because of what he perceives as a stigma based on misconceptions surrounding the rather loaded term. "Primitivism is a critique of where we turned away from the natural world...obviously the bringing down of industrial society is integral to that." He continues, calling it "a breaking away from industrialized, mechanized, domesticated life." This is where the

problem arises. Anarchists seem to agree that institutionalized racism, sexism, classism and homophobia are inevitable in a capitalist system. The split occurs when the dialogue moves to dismantling that system. If industrial society serves as an enforcer of the capitalist institution, it is inherently problematic. So we, as anarchists, face these questions: How far do we take the process of dismantling industrial society? Does that mean embracing a politic that is completely anti-technology? How do we define technology for that purpose? Is it in our best interest to focus on mutual aid, education, and theoretical discussion? Or should we put the majority of our energy into inciting mass insurrection in the hopes of forcing a national wake-up call to the injustice of this capitalist system? The answers aren't so easy considering the vast difference of opinion among anarchists and other leftists, but Rottin' tells me the answers as he and other EA see them. "I see myself as an insurrectionist first [because] we can't get anywhere without some major shit happening," he explains.

According to the EA, insurrection is necessary to "snap people out of it," a phrase repeated frequently among members of the community. But how does one go about inciting insurrection, and perhaps more importantly, how far is too far?

According to *Black Clad*

in the neighborhood around the event.

1997

June 1st incident: Protest campaign to prevent the cutting of old trees surrounding a parking lot for the construction of a parking garage. City workers attempt to cut the trees one day before City Council gives its final decision as to whether or not to cut the trees. People climb the trees in protest. Police, using pepper spray attempt to pull people out of the trees. One protester is severely injured from beatings and teargas after refusing to until he is finally forced out of the tree. The incident serves as a radicalizing force in Eugene and strengthens the anarchist community.

1999

June 18, Reclaim the Streets party. An uneventful party takes to the streets. Windows are broken at local shops, banks and fast food restaurants. Police move in, pushing the crowd into a nearby park where participants are tear gassed. Protesters throw tear gas canisters, rocks and bottles at the police. Rob Thaxton is arrested for throwing a rock at a cop. He is convicted and sentenced to seven years, four months in prison.

Third Fridays — demonstrations are orga-

nized in response to a call from the Zapatistas. Mainstream and anarchist community begin thinking more about capital. Liberal and anarchist groups begin working together, specifically making plans for Seattle.

N30, Seattle --

Several Eugene anarchists head north to protest the WTO. Eugene is blamed for helping to start the mass insurrection.

2000

Eugene Active Resistance April 20-June 18, nine weeks of activities, each on a different theme, brings together individuals and collectives from Eugene's radical activist and anarchist community to create framework for coordinating weekly forums, workshops, trainings, discussions, and direct action.

Candlelight vigil for Mumia, April 24. Open torches were used to light the path of the marchers. Some of these torches are dropped when police attempt to a few march stragglers for jaywalking. Police claim torches were intended as weapons.

May Day

Several Eugeneians head to Portland for a May Day march with Portland anarchists and radical activists. Marchers are confronted by police, several reports are made of police brutality after numerous arrests

Messenger, a zine based out of Eugene, insurrection is the goal and it's "not a well choreographed ballet..."

But they are sure of one thing: "You can't fuck shit up without breaking the rules, or overthrowing capitalism takes more than a well-worded economic critique" (*Black Clad Messenger* #10). But what does that mean you might be asking yourself. Okay, well, you asked ...*Black Clad Messenger* tells us:

What Is EUGENE ACTIVE EXISTENCE?

April 20-June 18, 2000



FUCKSHITUP BREAK ANY WINDOW. KILLA COP. PUNCTURE ALL TIRES. LITTER SLOBURBIA. OPEN HYDRANTS. BURN BLDGS. SCATTER NAILS. GLUE LOCKS. DOSE H2O. CLIP PHONES. PLANT INDO. GRAFFITTITALL. T.P. STREAMERS. CYANIDE THE VENTS. BURN BLDGS. CANCEL TECHNOKRATZ. DESTROY PRIVATE PROPS. KILL THE RICH. DISRUPT PUBLIC SERVICE. SEND BOMB THREATS. CREATE PANDAMOANIUM. SPREAD RUMORS. BREAK CLOCKS. SMASH TVS. SABOTHE GEARS. DESTROYALL SYSTEMS. PULLALLALARMS. PRANKS. TRICKS. SPLATTER BILLBOARDS. SINK SHIPS. CLOG DRAINS. TURN IT ALL OFF. SHUTITALL DOWN. BUSTA METER. JAM IT. STEAL IT. RUNAMOK. TILTIT. Take Action!"

Action is key, spontaneous action is best, but where does that leave organization and theory in the scheme of things? As Rottin' put it, "I think people can spend their whole lives talkin' about theory and never do anything." Granted, but does that eliminate the need for a forum for self-critique and idea sharing, a forum through which we can learn from one another, from our mistakes and from the lessons of the past without having to

painfully and inefficiently relive them one individual at a time? Can theory not successfully co-exist and actually enhance action?

As for organization, the claim that EA are wholly anti-organizing seems a bit harsh for a community that runs Food Not Bombs, a no-cost daily coffee and political forum called Café Anarquista, not to mention numerous alternative media including a pirate radio station and a cable access television show. "I see what we're doing in three veins," Rottin' explains. "One is building communities of resistance based on mutual aid like gardening, growing our own food, [and] our own schooling (freeskool). Basically, decentralizing all knowledge and spreading it throughout the community...[including] alternative

media so we can get information out to people...." The second vein is "the deconstruction of our own social programming to deal with issues that are programmed into us like sexism, racism, classism... which also fits into the mutual aid because we teach each other how to do that. The third is basically bring down industrial capitalist society." It's that third one that gets tricky. According to Rottin' there are three parts to this final vein: decreasing announced days of protest to maintain a surprise element; surprise forms of protest, including public protest; and finally underground activity.

This outline shows a very general organization to EA activism, but the question of organization in terms of the specific actions of the EA remains. If spontaneity and the element of surprise are of the utmost importance, where do planning and strategizing fall in the list of priorities? The "Bring on the Ruckus" Society (yet another manifestation of EA, and a none-too-subtle counter to the Ruckus Society) explained in its recent publication *Disorderly Conduct* (Summer 2000): "We don't seek the clean, methodical image of the 'empathetic revolution,' recently represented through corporate media filters by such professional bureaucracies as the Ruckus Society, Art and Revolution, and the Direct Action Network. We want to abolish the institutions that

have imposed a suffocating order on our resistance. We harken the liberation of desire, and the spontaneous and free-flowing nature of insurrection." From these sentences it appears that the EA consider organization a potentially negative force, placing limitations on true freedom, not to mention "true" resistance. Perhaps the EA should consider that a strategy idealizing and relying on spontaneity leaves itself open to those that wish to infiltrate such radical groups. Counter intelligence agencies, crowd control planners and the like seek out chaotic or seemingly unorganized groups of people for the purpose of infiltration leaving individuals and the entire group at risk. Does it really make sense to leave an opening by emphasizing spontaneity at the expense of organization? Not much of a strategy when it comes right down to it.

The EA should consider more thoroughly the consequences of a lack of organization. Rob Thaxton, an anarchist who came to Eugene for the week leading up to the June 18 Reclaim the Streets demonstration, might have been able to leave Eugene with the rest of his friends had there been more of an organizing force pulling the activities together—but then, with more organization the spontaneity would be gone and the actions might never have happened. Who decides whether seven and

are made.

June 18

Jeffrey "Free" Luera and Craig "Crittter" Marshall are arrested for arson after two fires are set in the Whiteacre neighborhood targeting a car dealership and an oil company. Luera and Marshall are each indicted on ten counts (nine felonies and one misdemeanor). The maximum penalty if they are guilty of all charges is eighty-six years. Both plead "not guilty" on all charges.

June 18

Historic reenactment of J18 1999. On June 17 and 18 hundreds in Eugene celebrate the militant anti-capitalist spirit of J18 1999. There is high police presence but confrontation is kept to a minimum.

With over eighty arrests accumulated over the spring and early summer, Eugene anarchists dedicate the rest of the summer to legal and jail support.





Graphic from Disorderly
Conduct (Summer 2000)

they have done to prevent it? How do they feel about the fact that he was made an example for a pattern of protest that was not his? It would be different if Thaxton willingly put himself out there as a poster boy for Eugene insurrectionists, but he did not. He was not even from Eugene. It's worth considering what kind of effort and organization might have prevented his arrest and subsequent incarceration. Ultimately Thaxton chose to pick up the rock and throw it, but was he aware of the sort of support he could or could not be expecting from the EA community prior to taking that risk? An over-reliance on spontaneity and a lack of organization makes it more difficult to draw the lines between those willing to get arrested, or put themselves on the line in some other way, and those who cannot afford to do so. Without having some level of distinction by which to offer appropriate support, actions are made less safe for everyone. The number of people willing to be openly affiliated with the cause will diminish. How many single mothers, persons of color, or first time activists will attend the next action, even if it's only to show support, if they fear arrest or other repercussions just for being in attendance? Is this really a "lib-

a half years of Thaxton's life are worth the good that came from the demonstration? This is not to hold the EA responsible for Thaxton's actions or his arrest. But what could

eration of desires," or just an excuse to have a tantrum, possibly at someone else's expense.

The EA have managed to charm many a restless activist. After all, they are doing something. One Portlander estimates she picks up between 4 and 5 anarchists a week hitch-hiking their way to Eugene. Should we all be so eager to follow suit? They are clever, espousing numerous catchy phrases and slogans, but that might make the EA more suited to lead the next anarcho pep rally than to serve as a strategic guide. This is not to say that what is happening in Eugene is superficial and has no value. Eugene anarchists are posing important and highly anticipated questions to the activist community.

Questions that will be crucial as we enter into the next phase of anarchism in America and around the world. How far are we willing to go? What happened to the long tradition of insurrection in anarchism? And is that still a viable strategy? If so, when and how? Or like the EA suggest, have we grown too comfortable in our little communities, in our daily lives to risk a little more? What are we willing to sacrifice to achieve our goals? Should we wait for the next Seattle to push us into action, or do we organize now and create something on our own terms?

Good questions, crucial questions, but without theory to coincide with action, how are we to facilitate discussion and a deeper critical analysis of those actions. Or are we not supposed to think, just act? Slogans are great motivators, but if there's no substantial position behind them, it all amounts to talking shit in cryptic epithets that perplex the target of

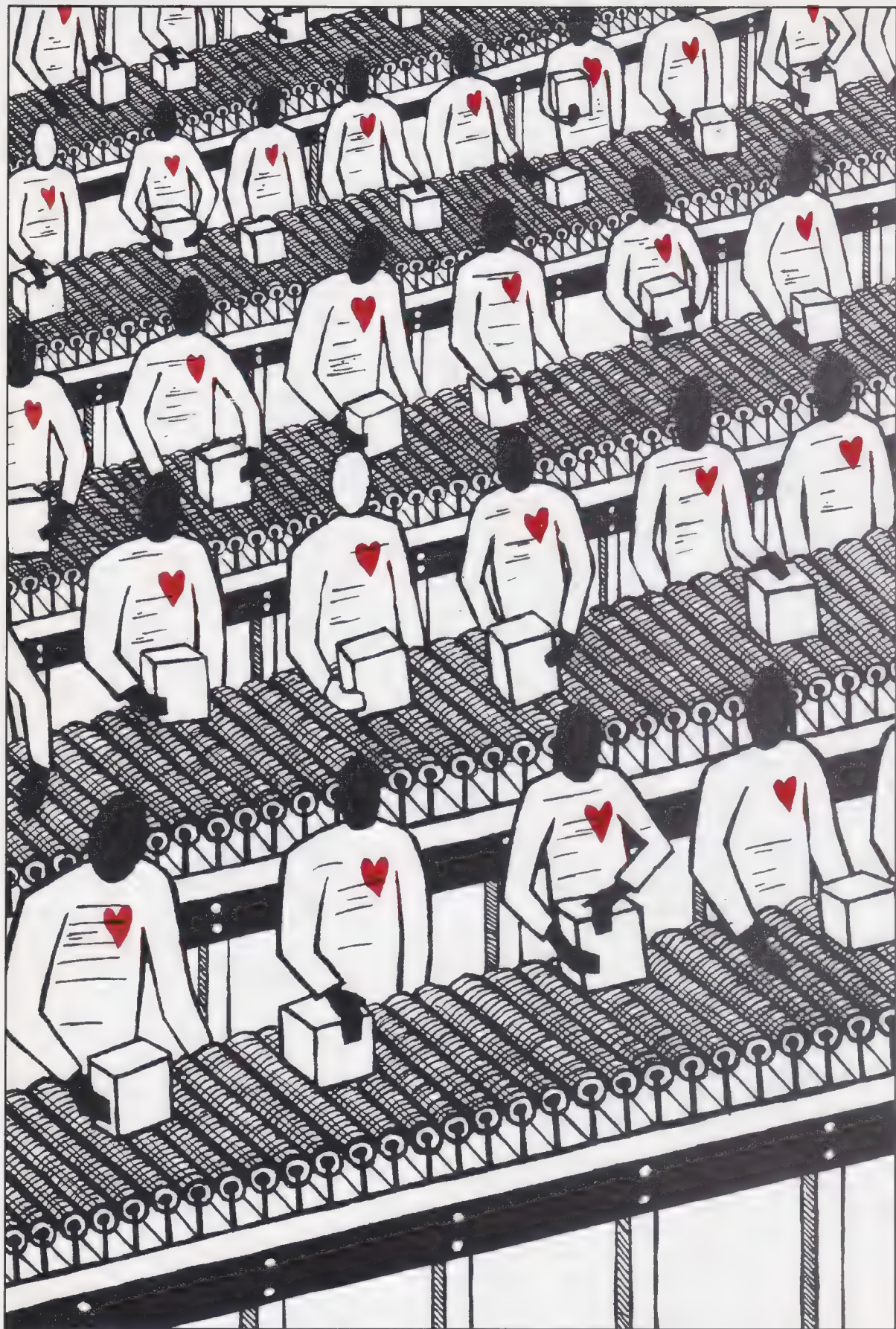
the sentiment and would-be supporters alike. Or worse, the slogan serves to falsely unite conflicting groups based on a single issue rather than an overall analysis. Are these the coalitions we want to build? Do we want to march alongside fascists like Pat Buchanan who happen to fall on the same side of an oversimplified slogan like "Down with Globalization!"? I certainly don't believe that is what the EA intend—but they had better be prepared for that response.

Fucking shit up isn't always the most appropriate strategy and we need to be able to make that distinction. We need theory to sustain a dialogue with a diversity of participants from the larger anarchist community. We must be more willing to offer and accept criticism of our actions so that we can learn from the problems different communities have encountered. What would the EA do differently now? If in Green Anarchy "the experience" is most important, more so than what is written or thought, etc., does that mean we all must endure the same mistakes over and over again and watch each other do it? Or can we enhance each other's experience with the knowledge we share with one another. We must learn from our history and not just for the purpose of citing dates and places of past insurrections to justify what we do today, but to learn about the circumstances and the movements behind them. How were the participants affected and how did it impact the movement?

We must look outside our familiar communities for input and strategy. Otherwise we risk insulating or even alienating ourselves from the communities in which we live because according to group X,

groups Y and Z are "too liberal," "too conservative," or "not radical enough" for our FUCKSHITUP ways. Let us not forget the underlying privilege of the FUCKSHITUP perspective, a feeling that there's nothing left to lose. We can't be so bold as to make that judgement for anyone but ourselves and our actions should reflect that. If we foster an oversimplified "us" vs. "them" mentality, we will not only alienate ourselves from the community, we will alienate the community from us. We will, by our own doing, impede the development of the diverse relationships necessary to our own autonomy. In effect, we will foster the ageism, racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia we seek to eradicate. In the end, as the anarchists of Eugene claim, will the ends truly justify the means?





Work, Josh MacPhee



ANARCHISTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

by Brian Dominick

At present, I am engaged in two major community organizing projects in my hometown of Syracuse, New York. I have long considered myself an anarchist, proud of that tradition and heritage, but neither of the organizations carrying out these projects operates under the anarchist label, or even with an explicit understanding of being anarchistic groups or activities. In my mind, however, both are precisely that.

One of the projects is the development of the Neighborhood Arts, Culture and Technology center (ENACT), which will be housed in a gorgeous Victorian home our group is working to renovate. ENACT is a "coalition" of six nonprofit activist groups ranging from a neighborhood association representing working class folks, mostly poor people of color; to a group of radical artists known as Altered Space; to a collective I helped found in 1997 whose goal is to provide media tools and resources to activist organizations and low-income communities.

Also included are Syracuse's community radio station, a local teen center project, and a group focusing on video media. The ENACT Center itself is to house these organizations, facilitate their activities, and provide space for diverse other community members and institutions, all revolving around the arts, culture, technologies to which our neighborhood has had little access, educational

programming, and independent media. The intention is to take an organic approach to developing community awareness, cohesiveness and empowerment by drawing from ourselves the skills, ideas and energy needed to achieve these goals instead of importing them from outside our neighborhood.

The second project is organizing to oppose the wholesale spraying of communities throughout



Onondaga County with pesticides which are potentially hazardous to humans. The West Nile virus scare which began in New York City last year and has encompassed much of the Northeast in 2000 has prompted our County Health Department to make a late-stage attempt to rid us of the mosquitoes allegedly carrying the virus (though no such mosquitoes, nor human cases, have yet been discovered). Our group is so new that we have no name yet, but the few dozen already participating do have common objectives, which include a moratorium on spraying and public referendum in the future.

In each of these cases, other anarchists and I find ourselves in a common dilemma, the one most self-identified anarchist youth seem to fear like death itself—namely, how do we approach working in diverse coalitions with people from a variety of backgrounds and ideological perspectives while maintaining our anarchist principles and ideals? I am happy to report, the conflict is

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

not as bad as most might expect. Sure, self-identified anarchists are the minority at every meeting of both organizations. Most involved don't even consider themselves particularly radical, and some simply aren't.

Nevertheless, when it comes to project objectives, as well as organizational structure and process, there is dramatic consistency with anarchist principles and ideals, even though the words "anarchism," "anarchy," and "anarchist" have rarely if ever been spoken at meetings. So far, each group has relied on nonhierarchical, collective and committee based structures as well as consensus process. In the case of ENACT I have actually found myself—a consensus theorist and trainer—arguing with non-anarchists against the generalized use of consensus decision-making. In the newly-formed anti-pesticides group, people who have never been involved in radical projects before are making lucid arguments against the development of hierarchy, and against simple majoritarian decision-making models. I've yet to hear opposition to that stance from anyone involved, including vocal leaders with backgrounds in decidedly mainstream groups such as the Sierra Club.

Let me explain why I think any of this is relevant in the first place. In the 1990s, I spent some years trying to figure out how to combine my anarchist politics and identity with the social activism I felt was most important at the time: community organizing. Like many, I recognized that organizing with my neighbors around issues of common concern—whether of local, national, or even international importance—is one of the



Members of ENACT outside the the Neighborhood Arts, Culture and Technology center.

best ways to bring large numbers of people into social movements while possibly making concrete gains and improving peoples' lives.

The major conflict for me, at the time, was determining how to mix those anarchistic principles, ideals and identity with the organizing I most wanted to do. My initial inclination was to "recruit," for lack of a better term, members of the broader community (defined mostly by geography and class) into something I perceived to be "the anarchist movement" (which I now consider a "community" defined primarily by ideology and lifestyle). I'm not sure if I could have defined that "movement" at the time, but I was fairly safe from having to do so since almost nobody was asking, including those of us who saw ourselves as intimately involved in it. I still believe it's the case that those who talk of "the anarchist movement" are typically referring more to some conglomeration of people associated and defined more by their identity—by what they call themselves—than by what they actually do, or even what they believe.

What I found in my own experi-



Clean up crew at the ENACT house.

ence was that most of those who readily identified as anarchists weren't engaged or even interested in doing what I now consider to be community organizing. Among those who were doing local organizing, it was typically the organizing of and with other anarchists. We weren't intentionally isolating ourselves from people who didn't identify as anarchists. We were conducting lots of outreach to diverse communities under the banner of anarchism, trying to attract more people into "the anarchist movement." Effectively, and perhaps predictably, this actually did wind up isolating such organizers and their organizations, however unintentionally.

I don't mean to imply that this paradox hadn't been analyzed by others in the anarchist movement, or that by breaking from that method of organizing I was anything like a pioneer. I had long been ignoring or undervaluing the arguments of anarchists who had been calling for a different approach, more like the one I presently take. I had been siding with the model that still seems to be dominant that we need to build an anarchist movement instead of injecting ourselves (and thus our anarchism) into other movements and projects. The difference

between whether to wave the black flag wherever we go or simply to maintain our anarchist principles without flaunting them, and insist upon anarchistic goals, organizations, policies and actions without necessarily referring to them as such.

When I wrote an article called *Abandoning the Anarchist Movement* in 1998, calling on anarchists to switch perspectives and approaches with me, I was expecting lots of flack. Even though I have since given talks under that title at numerous anarchist gatherings, and had countless casual discussions on the topic, I have encountered remarkably little resistance to the general idea. Indeed, the response has mostly been enthusiastic, and in many cases people have reacted as though these ideas—not my own, to be sure—are old news. The most adversarial response has been to the perceived hostility in my suggestion that we not simultaneously build something known as "the anarchist movement".

But when I read contemporary anarchist literature, I find very little intellectual attention being given to the approach to organizing that more and more of us seem to be focusing on in practice. Even beyond the community organizing scale, for example in the anti-globalization movement, the model of organizing seems to be moving toward what I'm advocating and away from the black-flag-waving method. Nonetheless, in anarchist journals rhetoric still focuses on the building of an explicitly anarchist movement. Anarchists are still, then, resistant to label "anarchist" any project which isn't

- 1) self-identified as anarchist,
- 2) explicitly anti-state and anti-capital, and
- 3) made up of people who identify as anarchists.

I have no intention of arguing that either the groups I am working with locally, or the the anti-globalization movement, should be called "anarchist groups" or "anarchist movements." I really don't care. But I do think they should be recognized as largely consistent with anarchist ideals and principles. It does seem these types of movements and organizations have generally been deemed worthy of anarchist participation, which itself seems like an improvement from the attitude most of us wore like chips on our shoulders in the '90s. But I remain perplexed by the push for a separate "movement" which calls itself anarchist and ostensibly aims for the eventual inclusion of all allies. It occurs to me that more success is being achieved by self-proclaimed anarchists working in an anarchistic fashion with those who do not call themselves anarchists, than by those still building a separate anarchist movement. (Yes, I realize many are doing both.) And while I would never advocate success at the risk of compromising one's principles, my experience is that the paradox is perhaps more one of perception than of reality.

Back to more specific and applied experience, it no longer surprises me when groups of ordinary people sit down to organize around something they all personally value, and conclude that anarchistic models of organizing (such as collectivism and participatory, direct democracy) make the most sense as an organizational methodology—even where

personal experiences with institutions have been primarily dominated by hierarchy and authoritarian procedures. In fact, it is precisely because of such experiences—instead of reading Kropotkin or Goldman—that so many people are willing to humor, if not enthusiastically insist upon, alternative approaches.

That said, I don't want to give the impression that these recent experiences have been perfectly smooth. For myself and the other anarchists I work with, there have been plenty of challenges, plus enough personal conflict and frustration to keep us from thinking we've departed from the real world and entered some utopia where revolution is just a matter of time. In the case of ENACT, for years we have entertained various authoritarian options for structure and process and in each case avoided them collectively. Still, as we approach the final stages of planning and formalizing our organization, tensions are rising around these very issues. For the past few meetings, our somewhat diversely constituted planning board has been debating different ways to establish the structure of the "team" which will staff the ENACT Center in the final stage before it opens, as well as once it is a public space.

We have agreed without difficulty that a handful of people should be paid to carry out the daily operations of the Center (with an all-volunteer "board of directors" representing member organizations and the community at large, still employing consensus to determine policies). We have also agreed that the staff should operate as a "team." But there is still contention around the specific structure of that staff. Proposals



Outdoor clean up crew at the house.

range from a pure collective with job complexes balanced for empowerment and remuneration for work based on effort instead of expertise, education, seniority or other customary irrationalities, all the way to a very traditional non-profit (or, for that matter, for-profit) structure incorporating great disparities in authority, responsibility, expertise, personal fulfillment and pay.

Early on, it looked like the conflict in preferences revolved mostly around semantics, but I now think that evaluation was based mostly in an arrogant perspective on the part of we anarchists, instead of a basis in reality. The notion that our inability to reach an easy consensus was due to language rather than the actual beliefs and positions of those opposing the collectivist proposal, still held by some of my fellow anarchists, simply served to invalidate our critics, mostly people of color and working class activists. As it turns out, those who were referring inaccurately to the idealist, collectivist approach as "leaderless" and "lacking accountability" remain in opposition to the approach even though it has been made clear that collective leadership and accountability are part and parcel to our approach. But it

is noteworthy that no one has ever made the argument that our ideal is anything less than wonderful. It appears they simply believe it won't work. They are reluctant to rest the future of an institution we have all worked tirelessly to build, on a theoretical structure which they don't believe will stand the test of time, or the real-world problems which we all acknowledge will doubtless arise on a daily basis at the ENACT house. Here the conflict is not one of intention, or one of conviction, as much as it is one of differing views on what will work or fail in the real world.

It would be unfair of me to overlook some other, more subtle factors, which are in truth the cause of most of my concern regarding the above-described, general dilemma facing ENACT. For starters, I do not get the impression that the values on which we are basing our various stances are all that congruous. Certainly we want to see the ENACT project succeed, but distinctions among our definitions of success are beginning to surface. Those arguing against the collectivist approach do not seem to be taking into account the value the work experience those on staff will be enveloped in, which has been a major factor for anarchists and others taking up the collectivist argument. In the case of a couple participants, in fact, our approach is seen as degrading or undervaluing the work of those at the bottoms of hierarchies. Many people are "happy" being bossed around, we are reminded. True as that may be, many of us of course are less than happy promoting that type of workplace dynamic when we have the option to create a rare instance of happiness

without hierarchy.

Additionally, the point has been raised that our institution should reflect the values of the community it serves, instead of those of a non-representative minority who have taken up the arduous task of forming that institution. Some members of our board, who happen to represent the majority of our neighbors more accurately than most other ENACT organizers, are concerned that imposing such an alternatively-organized institution in our community would be so foreign to everyday people that it would be deemed uninviting. Most seem to disagree with that prediction, but its validity as a position is greatly enhanced by the fact that its proponents may well be more in tune with our community than those of us who would otherwise be inclined to dismiss the argument's relevance.

I have also concerns, or maybe suspicions, that ENACT's overall objective may not be as inherently radical as I originally perceived it, and as it has been rhetorically expressed by us collectively. My main concern is the risk of such a dynamic organization contributing to the specter of gentrification always looming over low-income communities. It doesn't take an anarchist to be anti-gentrification but its resistance does require consciousness of and explicit opposition to the threat. Gentrification typically begins with the introduction of some element into an impoverished community which begins to render that community attractive to more affluent residents, usually yuppies. This can stem from numerous factors, from simple neighborhood beautification initiatives to an influx of trendy

artists looking for low-cost housing; typically, gentrification results from a combination of these factors.

The most common anarchist anti-gentrification strategy is a fairly blunt approach. It includes organizing neighbors to oppose "clean up" initiatives (more cops, fewer "street people," etc), raised rents, and so forth. More creative cases involve culture jamming and propaganda campaigns. I have no criticism of these tactics, all based on a strategy of making it more difficult for privileged classes and the governments which represent them to transform poor people's neighborhoods into up-scale urban (or rural) housing developments.

A more subtle approach to anti-gentrification—which often does not rise out of any concern for gentrification specifically—is the empowerment of residents from the inside out. Neighborhood organizations, credit unions, and other nonprofits work on housing, employment and other projects to strengthen neighbors and thus, intentionally or not, enhance their ability to resist assaults from the outside.

But one can see why any project intended to strengthen community could have unintended and undesirable results. While grassroots nonprofits are helping my neighborhood develop economically, from within—by drawing on the initiative and power of me and my neighbors to meet our own needs and take ownership of our community—they are also giving us a taste of the good life, where property values increase, skilled jobs are easier to come by, and so forth. Vigilance with regard to saturating our whole community—

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

rather than just a lucky few—with these benefits is a vital element of successful anti-gentrification campaign of this nature.

I am concerned that ENACT—which hopes quite explicitly to empower our community—is also walking a thin line between transforming community in potentially opposite directions. If ENACT serves to “beautify” our neighborhood in such a way that it simply becomes attractive to the affluent, ENACT will become a disservice. Because of this, as I see it, we need to take great pains to preserve the diverse demographics of our immediate community. If our focus slips away from serving the folks down the street from ENACT, and shifts in any way toward servicing more affluent sectors, we might as well start calling the Eastside “Shit Creek,” and rename ENACT “Detract.”

My inclination is to start introducing some of the more obviously radical approaches to anti-gentrification into the equally radical, though less explicitly so, projects currently dominating the local scene. I do not, however, perceive either strategy as more or less anarchistic than the other, or as more effective or necessary.

Turning again to the fledgling coalition forming in opposition to the County’s anti-mosquito campaign, altogether different conflicts may present themselves. While so far everyone involved agrees to stopping the present spraying campaign, and instituting a mechanism for the community to democratically decide on such issues in the future, strategic options again vary. We agree that, at some point or other, County officials will have to change their policy with regard to the spraying

itself as well as how directives like the spraying campaign are decided upon in the first place. Predictably, some of the founders of our as-yet-unnamed organization are primarily interested in pressuring officials through legal and legislative action, while others lean toward directly opposing the campaign until it becomes too difficult to continue. Many are of course on the fence or undecided at this stage.

All agree, of course, that we will need to conduct a thorough education campaign to counter the County’s full-scale indoctrination blitzkrieg which has most of our community begging to be spayed with Anvil or any other hazardous pesticide the Health Commissioner deems safe. We also agree that we need to increase membership and support for our group exponentially before we are likely to have much effect.

But once our community is better informed, and as we gain more and more sympathy and active involvement, where do we focus our energy in the process of actually changing County policies? That is, what actions do we take? And what precise goals do we aim for?

While an executive order from the Health Commissioner is all that is required to stop the pesticide spraying, I’ve yet to hear anyone entertain the idea that reasonable argument aimed at him in particular will contribute to changing the current policy. Everyone knows he will have to be forced one way or another. We could use rather direct approaches, such as disrupting the Health Department or even shutting it down, but since many of the Department’s daily

undertakings do indeed contribute to the betterment of our community (however much we might wish a better institution was carrying them out!), perhaps impeding all of the Department's work isn't the optimal approach. We could also conduct sabotage or civil disobedience to disable the trucks which nightly disseminate toxins into thousands of front yards, but fear of the reaction by police, the media and the public in general leaves those options undesirable to many involved, and perhaps less than optimal at this time.

Some members of our group favor an indirect approach. One idea is convincing the State Attorney General to file an injunction and/or a law suit against the County for various legal and civil violations we are documenting. Another is to pressure so-called "representatives" such as the County Executive and Legislators to, in turn, pressure or even fire the Health Commissioner. This approach of course leaves us all hardly more empowered than we were before the spraying began. Because that would put us effectively back at square one, the strategy is one anarchists and a few others hardly prefer to doing nothing at all beyond public education, considering the amount and nature of work it would require.

But since most recognize we need at least some form of long-term, grassroots empowerment, the secondary objective of a community referendum is also eagerly alive. Here again, though, we see a dichotomy between the direct and indirect options. As with halting the spraying itself, in order to ensure community consent in the future to direct County policy, the

County government itself will have to be forced into accepting the very idea of referendum. One option is for the County to organize and implement such referendums, and the other is the formation of an alternative institution which itself organizes meetings and procedures. Since the latter approach lends itself well to a dual power revolutionary strategy, it is the undisputed favorite among anarchists in the group. For those less interested in replacing the County government with a direct democracy, that option has less appeal, though here again it's not likely to be denigrated as an ideal.



The ENACT Center

In the end, all of these conflicts are rather ordinary among experiences of anarchists who undertake community organizing. In each case, the primary initiative to organize an institution to meet community needs came from anarchists who invited anyone interested to get involved at the outset. The decision to be inclusive of those who do not identify as—or necessarily even think like—anarchists, has in each case meant the black flag will not be flown nor references to anarchism even be made at meetings. It has meant non-anarchist approaches

will be considered and possibly even accepted by anarchists. It hasn't yet meant anarchists involved would ever compromise their ideals. Undeniably, though, it has meant many, many more people are working with anarchists, and being exposed to their ideas than would be the case if the founders had either closed off their organizations to those who don't identify as anarchists, or effectively done so by overbearingly pushing their ideas without considering and validating those of others. And though I am constantly reminded by hardcore anti-authoritarians that we anarchists have a monopoly on the true understanding and appreciation of democracy, I keep working with diverse groups of "non-anarchists" who value participatory, egalitarian decision-making and collectivism seemingly as much as I do, and perhaps more than do "anarchists" who would prefer ideological homogeneity to diverse involvement.

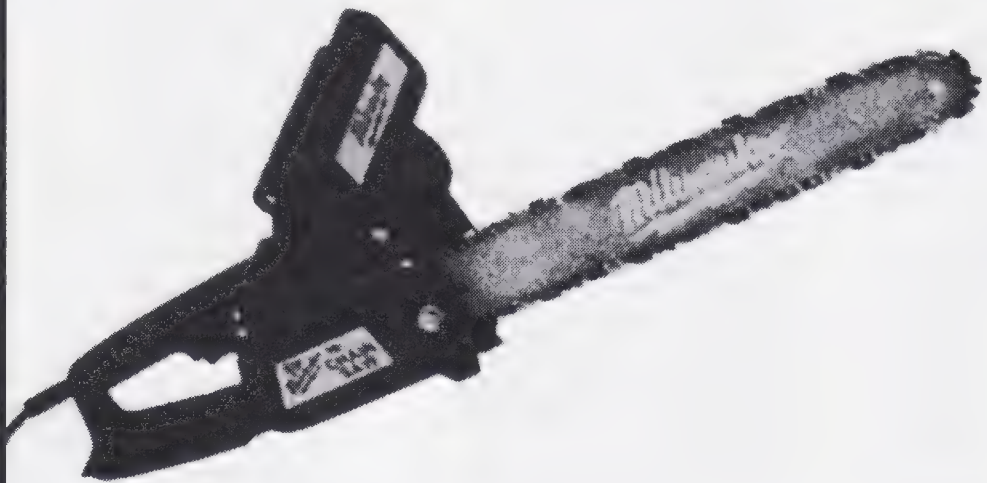
If the insurrection were coming this year, I would likely not be working so directly with people who didn't share particularly anarchist convictions, like strong opposition to nation states and in direct democracy. Hopefully, by the time insurrection does come, anarchist convictions will be widespread and wherever not held, at least well-respected. In the meantime, there is work to be done, and a revolution to foment. What is more important to me than the label or the image of anarchism is its practical realization in community-based projects. Indeed, short of that, I still prefer serious consideration of anarchistic methods and ideas by many, to their actual practice by an isolated few. So even if it means doing away with

the anarchist label, promoting anarchist reality should be the primary objective of anyone who wants to see it realized on a global scale.





**What is your
weapon against
capitalism?**



CHUMBAWAMBA—SEES, GETS



by Ernie Jacob

Chumbawamba's latest record, *What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG)*, hides its clever digs at aspects of popular culture inside a pretty musical package. The record is so clever and has so many musical and political in-jokes that casual listeners could easily miss its underlying irony and radicalism.

Without knowing much about the development of Chumbawamba's music, which goes back some 15–20 years, or about their political history, which dates back even further, my first take on the record was that these are aging leftist musicians who are essentially bored with popular music, but have a lot of studio time and technical resources that they are determined to exhaust while they still have the opportunity.

Thinking about the issues more, listening to the record again, and talking to some people more familiar with the musical and political history of the group, convinced me that my initial dismissive reaction was wrong. Chumbawamba's music, including their current effort, embodies a radical collective project that is spelled out in extensive writings on their web pages, and made much more overt and categorical in their political activity and in some of their earlier music.

Good politics from cultural figures should always be viewed with some

skepticism. Leadership doesn't normally come from notables and 'stars'. This is particularly true in popular music where performers often adopt a radical stance to distinguish themselves. Certainly it's good when bands put themselves on the 'right' side of a political issue. This can play a major role in popularizing a position. However, it often turns out to be more of a pose than a stance, melting into liberal platitudes when it is challenged, and quickly dropped when it becomes an obstacle on the easier roads to success.

By contrast, Chumbawamba's politics are substantial and raise issues that would be important even if they were not a well known band. Their website, www.chumbawamba.net, shows that they think pretty carefully about what they are doing and why they should do it. It is these positions that I want to examine. Summary statements are on the website's activists page in a section of answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ YOU!). The responses to questions from Santiago, Banacek, and Patrik are particularly relevant. These responses may not be the best and most complete statements of the band's positions, but they will serve as an indication of Chumbawamba's debates with their audience.

Taken by itself, Chumbawamba's inspired drenching of Labour Deputy Prime Minister Prescott in 1998 (Labour, Same Piss, New Bottle) might ultimately amount to no more than the Sex Pistols' confrontations with the English musical and media establishments or the Clash's Joe Strummer's appearances in a Red Brigade t-shirt, but there is more. In brief, Chumbawamba has concluded that to survive, economically, politically, and musically, they must work

Chumbawamba
Review

within the reality of the capitalist structure of the music business and avoid getting trapped into "cultural ghettos" isolated and insulated from the real conditions of life and struggle: "We are now left with the twin legacies of either a responsible changing anarchist milieu or a few thousand snotty-nosed punks glamorizing the eighties and the politics of denial." Chumbawamba argues repeatedly that the benefit of signing with EMI was to get an "audience," "to get into people's living rooms," "[to give people access to] ideas which are at odds with capitalism." Chumbawamba sees their audience as dependent on "access to the media, access to radio," etc. for getting such big ideas. The band sees themselves as the source of the ideas, as a "propaganda machine." They claim, "We're not interested in a revolution that is more to do with what you look like, what music you listen to and what you eat. That's not a revolution, it's a 'subculture.' We don't want to exist outside the mainstream, we want to inject revolutionary ideas into it." On another point, Chumbawamba responds to a question about EMI's previous connection with a company producing armaments by arguing that they would not have signed with a label that had military connections.

These arguments are extremely defensive, down-playing the problems with the course the band has chosen and exaggerating the new possibilities that it provides. Chumbawamba presents its choices, on the one hand, as pretty much the only alternative to irrelevance and, on the other hand, the key to having an impact on popular consciousness. Despite the defensiveness and the caricatured alternatives, Chumbawamba's treatment of the major label issue, its implied critique of the 'do it yourself' (DIY) approach, and its conception of the relationship between 'mainstream' and 'alternative,' between

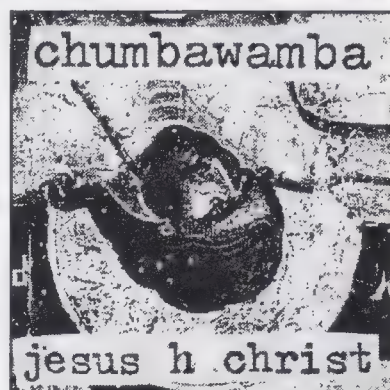
'subculture' and 'class struggle' make some persuasive arguments. I want to deal briefly with one or two of them.

Success on a major label does deliver a certain 'access,' but a band with radical politics must realize that this will be increasingly limited and conditional. Capitalist institutions will not subsidize effective anti-capitalism for very long. Beyond this, perhaps a more important point is that a politi-

Music can channel and focus anger and discontent, creating a popular sense of solidarity and social distinctiveness and of participation in the development of something new, different, and better—a sense of participating in a radical break with normal routine.

cal band must pay a high price for this mass audience. The audience is getting two messages. There is the message contained in Chumbawamba's music, presuming it is deciphered. But the medium is also the message. The message that capitalist culture is sufficiently flexible and hegemonic to treat Chumbawamba's music as 'legitimate' and turn it into a salable commodity is not one that helps our side. Chumbawamba argues that they can determine the terms of the relationship with EMI, but it's still a strange and toothless sort of anti-capitalism that turns a profit for capital.

It's hard to believe that Chumbawamba could disagree with these points given their understanding of the music business, but they seem to ignore it in their haste to evade criticism and picture their course





as the only realistic one. Of course, there is no down-playing the tremendous practical difficulties involved in surviving as political radicals and musical independents. Chumbawamba's description of

the limitations of the DIY approach has lots of validity and most of the complaints they get about selling it out are pretty much hypocritical crap. Just like the rest of us, musicians must make choices from bad alternatives. It does not rest solely on Chumbawamba to create the context where 'good' choices would be viable. The immense political potential of popular music lies in its ability to project popular needs, aspirations and potentials. Music can channel and focus anger and discontent, creating a popular sense of solidarity and social distinctiveness and of participation in the development of something new, different, and better—a sense of participating in a radical break with normal routine. This can happen in advance of a politically articulated popular movement and be an important factor in the development of such a movement. Getting on a major label, getting radio time, getting substantial advances for the next album, getting access to the best of musical technique and technology—none of these have any relationship to the development of such a movement. Without the momentum of a popular movement, the reservoir of energy created by good radical music is eventually diverted and dissipated into a kind of niche market which various capitalist institutions can suck dry for profit. The first priority of a political band must be to stay

close to it's base.

Chumbawamba's course is at odds with this view. This is evident in the very language of their arguments. The access they now have to their new audience may or may not be important for record sales, but it is irrelevant to revolution. Whatever access is achieved in this manner interposes various capitalist structures and processes between audience and band, turning the audience into an atomized and passive aggregation of individual consumers. This will become a drastic limitation on the radical potential of their music. The problem is that the goal should not be for the band to get into living rooms but to help people get out of them.

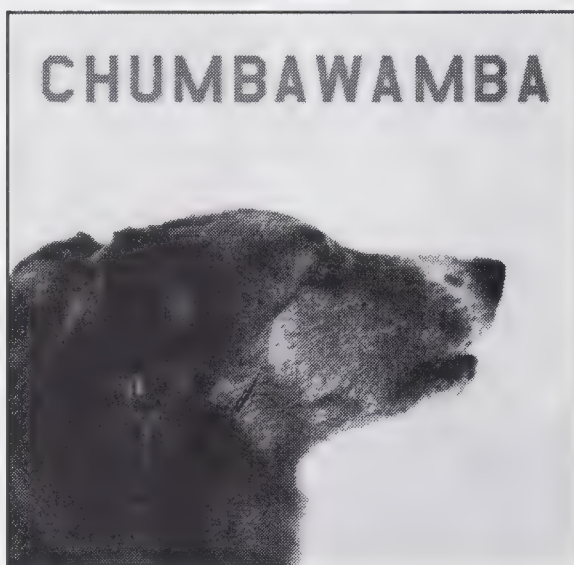
Capitalism is a system with no good parts, not even Ben and Jerry's. Categorical and comprehensive rejection of capitalism—what we need and want has no point of connection with what it can offer—is fundamental for an anti-capitalist revolution. This point disappears in Chumbawamba's vigorous arguments against musical and political 'subcultures.' I understand and agree with some of the most practical points Chumbawamba is making, but they give up way too much. A subculture by the logic of the language is subordinate to something else. That something else must be the dominant capitalist culture. Of course we can't be content with ghettoized subcultures that are essentially subordinated to the dominant culture we aim to destroy. Our alternative cannot be limited to being theatrical and excentric gadflies in the so-called 'mainstream' where every imaginable kind of shit floats.

The revolutionary movement has to build its own revolutionary culture and this culture is impossible without drawing categorical lines of demarcation with the 'mainstream.' That means clarifying who is the move-

Review Chumbawamba

ment, because that is not always clear. Cheerleading and slogans about freedom and revolution can be co-opted not only by ad agencies trying to sell sneakers to generation X, Y and Z, but also by other enemies of the current state, our enemies. A revolutionary cultural bloc will not be easy to sustain. The possibility of being reabsorbed as a subcultural enclave will always be present, but it can be resisted. The possibility of drowning in the mainstream will always remain, but we can learn to swim against the current.

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 Email: chumba@chumba.demon.co.uk
 Info, updates, comments, on the web
 at: www.chumba.com
www.chumbawamba.net



SKILL SHARE

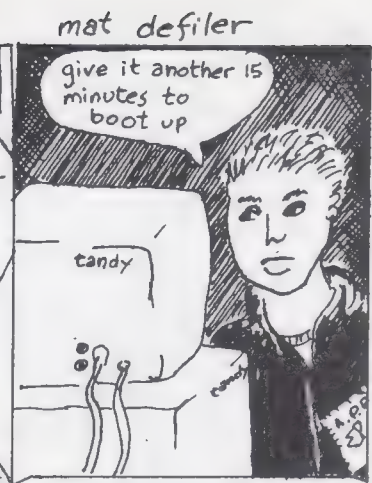
I remember being really INSPIRED by the workshop offerings at ANARCHIST GATHERINGS...



"like 'SCAMMING MEGACORPORATIONS AS POLITICAL PROTEST'"



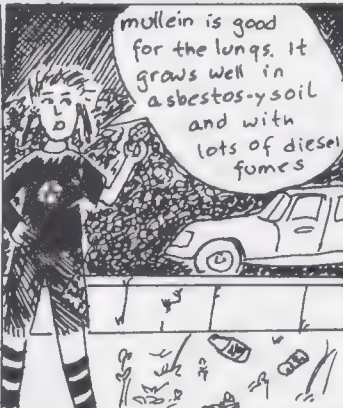
"REALLY UNHEALTHY VEGAN COOKING."



"COMPUTER HACKING ON OBSOLETE DUMPSTERED COMPUTERS"



"PANSEXUAL AEROBIC TOUCH-HEALING LOVE FEAST" (followed by discussion/check in)



"NATURAL HEALING FROM SIDELOTS: AN URBAN HERB WALK"



"CREATING A DUMPSTER RESOURCE GUIDE"

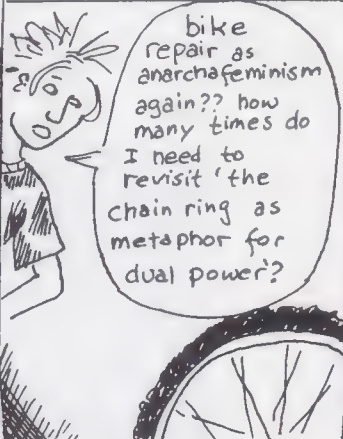
NOW, I FIND MYSELF LESS EXCITED

or

Or, maybe I'm just not the person I used to be....

Is it because the offerings have gotten less interesting?

maybe just nothing new.



Disclaimer - this stuff is fictional.

Mat Defiler

PUBLIC EVENTS

LEARNING FROM THE OLD PHILADELPHIA MOVEMENT

By Robert Helms

The anarchist collectives of our time can gain useful insights on outreach and cultural development by examining the ways in which our forebears invited the wider public to drink of our philosophy. Let's take the case of the Philadelphia comrades during the legendary period from 1889 through 1917. I say legendary because these activists were referred to in terms of nostalgic reverence by those who remembered them for decades afterward.

The range and variety of activities generated by the anarchists in these years was impressive in itself. There was a long, steady run of educational lectures, as well as radical literature discussion groups, theatrical performances, street parades, protest marches, open-air orations, and most remarkably, the elaborate fund-raising musical balls. These events can in many cases be compared and, in some cases, contrasted with current activities, but there certainly are close modern-day equivalents for every kind of event we find in the old Philadelphia scene.

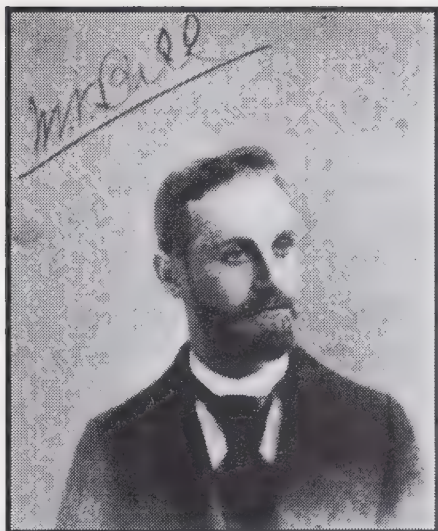
The earliest sustained schedule was the lecture series sponsored by the Ladies' Liberal League (LLL), a forum organized in 1891 by a diverse team of young women anarchists. Included were Michigan-born Voltairine de Cleyre; Perle McLeod, who came from Scotland as a girl; Mary Hansen, originally from Denmark; and a widely respected Russian



Voltairine de Cleyre, 1901

nihilist named Natasha Notkin. With the possible exception of Notkin, about whom nothing is known after 1917, all of these women remained committed to anarchism until the end of their days.

The speakers list featured both local anarchists and other learned people who lectured on subjects of interest to social reformers and radicals in general. The city's Superintendent of Kindergarten spoke on children's education; Honore J. Jaxon, a Canadian rebel leader in exile, discussed the sexuality of Native American women;



Dr. Michael Valentine Ball

and Ida Craddock gave her unique views on religious eroticism.

Mary O'Reilly, the state factory inspector for the city's Jewish Quarter, talked about child labor in her lecture to the LLL. She certainly was an authority on

the subject, and her official reports reveal genuine diligence and a commitment to reform, even though she was not empowered to enforce workplace laws in a meaningful way. To this day, these reports are important documents on the sweatshop system of that era, and are used by researchers in comparing it with the today's global sweatshop system.

Dr. Frances Emily White, a poet and singularly brilliant physiologist at Women's Medical College, examined prostitution in a lecture for the LLL. Dr. White held a positive interpretation of the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, and viewed hygiene and ethics as parallel concepts. She is credited with raising the standards of medical education for women in the United States. Unfortunately, her exact views on prostitution have not survived.

Certain speakers hosted by the LLL were world-class authorities in their fields. The paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope was the former curator of the National Museum in Washington, D.C. and, when he lectured for the Philly anarchists in the early 90's, he taught geology at the University

of Pennsylvania. He discovered over 1,000 species of fossil vertebrates and published 600 separate books and articles during his career. For all this, Voltairine de Cleyre later remembered him as a "reactionist."

More fondly remembered was Dr. Michael Valentine Ball, a physician who worked at the nearby state penitentiary. His book on bacteriology was the benchmark English text on the subject for some thirty years. At the LLL, Ball gave a talk criticizing the notorious theories of the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who had convinced the scientific mainstream that natural-born criminals could be spotted by noting the shape of their ear lobes, the knit of their eyebrows, and whether they had scars or tattoos.

The sculptor G. Frank Stephens often took the podium among anarchists to discuss Henry George's theories and the Single Tax movement. Some events were debates between opposing speakers from the two movements. The members of anarchist groups and Single Tax societies overlapped quite a lot in the region, and later, they both fought arm-in-arm against the suppression of free speech. Other debates were held on topics such as Marriage vs. Free-love Unions, with very convincing arguments on both sides.

The anarchists themselves gave many lectures, mostly in English or Yiddish, but there were quite a few done in Italian, French, or German, or sometimes there would be a lineup with one in each language. The non-anarchist speakers provided an opportunity for a wide range of topics to be publicly discussed in an anarchist

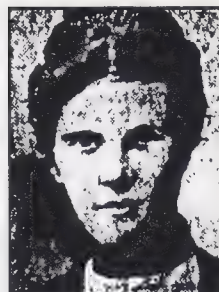
forum, which not only educated the anarchists, but also had the speakers answering questions put to them by a radical audience, and perhaps making connections that were fruitful for both sides. There are many surviving reports that indicate a mutual respect between the anarchist organizers and their distinguished guests. The LLL organizers cultivated the brightest minds around and conversed with them as fellow intellectuals.

Some of the more talked-about speakers for LLL and later venues were anarchist personalities from overseas, such as the Englishmen Charles Mowbray and John Turner, and also more famous thinkers such as Johann Most, Alexander Berkman, and Peter Kropotkin. Mowbray was arrested during his 1894 address to the Philadelphia anarchists, in part for saying that the US flag was "a rag, and should be torn up and used for handkerchiefs to blow your noses on." Several radical groups rallied for his release, and the mainstream press was skeptical on the need for his arrest. The local papers were friendly to Kropotkin when he came by in 1897 and presented "*The State: Its Part in History*" to a crowd of two thousand. The reports noted his inherited title, "Prince," his pre-eminence as an intellectual, his scholarly tone, and the way he tied in his topic with current governmental abuses that were happening in Pennsylvania.

Johann Most, one of the world's most famous anarchists, spoke in Philadelphia about seven times. He stopped here in 1883 shortly after his arrival in the country, and he was given a 60th birthday party on Lombard Street in 1906, just a week before his death. It turned out to be his last public

talk. As the police arrived and broke up the festivities this time, the local comrades had mixed reactions. George Brown, the self-educated English shoemaker who presided, called out, "very well then, let the meeting end with a prayer," and the audience responded by singing *La Marseillaise*, the French revolutionary anthem. Brown's remark was a joke, since he was a common sight around the city, making open-air atheistic speeches. Unknown to the cops, an Italian comrade named Dominic Donelli was stopped by another anarchist as he stepped up behind the police captain with the blade of his stiletto bared and ready to strike.

The culture of anarchism in that era was a highly charged intellectual climate, where persons of any level of education could find the space for their full development. George Brown would regularly lecture on poetry and literature, and impress the public with his knowledge and scholarly bearing. Physicians like Leo Noy Gartman and Max Staller met with teachers, cigar makers, retail clerks, and students in the anarchist clubs to discuss everything from crime and punishment to the psychology of sex. These two doctors were to become major figures in local Jewish life, aside from their anarchism. Both were amateur actors, and they were co-founders of Philadelphia's Mt. Sinai Dispensary (a large hospital in later years), serving as its first treasurer and president, respectively. The dispensary offered health care to the impoverished sweatshop workers, including the treatment of venereal diseases and, very possibly, abortions. Both were among the most



Mary Hansen



George Brown

Catherine Breshkovskaya



In the old days, there were the Arestantin or Prisoners' Balls held by the Anarchist Red Cross, the direct ancestor of the modern ABC, which were held every March. There were also the Bouren or Peasant Balls, held on Thanksgiving Day from 1905. Boris Yelensky gives a thorough description of the early Peasant Balls, which "centered around an elaborate caricature of the institution of marriage. Long wires were strung across the hall, from which were suspended various fruits which represented the forbidden fruits of the Garden of Eden. Around the hall were booths, in which stood members of the organizing committee, dressed as priests of the various religious denominations, as well as girls in peasant dresses and young men in the uniforms of policemen and soldiers. The girls would propose marriage to the men with whom

they danced, and when the men refused them, the girls would call upon the policemen or soldiers for help. The men would be arrested and taken before one of the priests, who would perform the ceremony of marriage, give the girl a ring, and collect a fee from the man. Afterwards the girl would demand a divorce, and the man would be taken before a judge, who would ask a second fee for dissolving the marriage. In addition, any man who wished to twist one of the forbidden fruits from its wire would be arrested and fined. These fees and fines brought in most of the proceeds of this event."

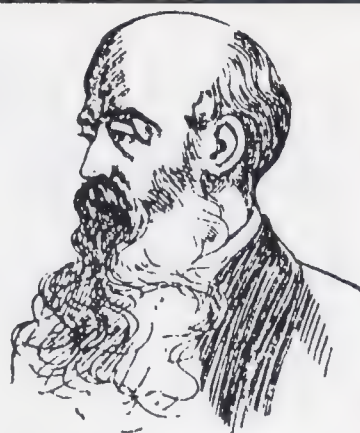
Probably the most remarkable series of anarchist celebrations were the annual Russian Tea Parties, organized every March from 1897 until 1916 by Natasha Notkin to raise money for whichever anarchist cause needed it at a given time. When things were dicey, such as in 1902 following President McKinley's assassination by a self-identified anarchist, the party was held at Notkin's home, but normally they were held in large venues, holding two or three thousand people, either in the Jewish Quarter or along North Broad Street. Typically there would be a 25 cent admission, there would be musical and singing performances, and dancing would continue until three in the morning. Hundreds of dollars would be raised and distributed to causes like the anarchist newspaper projects going at the time, to Kropotkin for the revolutionary efforts in Russia (1905), or to the Ferrer Modern School of Stelton (1916).

While fund-raiser parties today provide a small-scale equivalent of the old anarchist balls, what

they bring to mind for me is the four-day Mid-Atlantic Anarchist gathering of 1993, which launched a major revival in the local movement. In that long weekend, we rented a school and a church. Workshops were held on things like plumbing & electricity for squatters; lectures were given by an anarchist fiction writer, former political prisoners, anarchist parents, and queer labor activists. The gathering creat-

ed a massive groundswell of pride and new morale, both while it was being organized and long after it was over. Such is the power of a well-executed anarchist festival.

In the old days, protests against injustices were generally held in the form of indoor meetings rather than in the street, but in 1907, when the IWW organizers Moyer, Pettibone, and Haywood were framed for a murder in Idaho, radicals rallied in their defense. Philadelphia anarchist leader Joseph Cohen recalled that, "as the time for their trial approached, the protest meetings spread all over the country. We called a meeting for a Saturday in May in front of City Hall, in collaboration with the Jewish working



PRINCE KRAPOTKIN STRIKES NO FIRE.

The Celebrated Anarchist's
Lecture Devoid of Sensa-
tional Climaxes.

THE STATE'S PART IN HISTORY

Upon This Subject the Prince Ad-
dresses About Three Hundred
Under the Auspices of the
Ladies' Liberal League.

Newspaper coverage
collage



Promotional flyer for Spiral Q

class movement downtown. On the way to City Hall it began to rain...Most people had their best clothes on and, as they ran for shelter, they broke ranks. It was only the young women in their clinging wet clothes, showing the curves of their beautiful bodies, who marched on in the cold rain to City Hall through the empty streets. There, under the roof of the entrance of the gigantic building, we carried on our protest meeting, our audience consisting of several hundred undaunted women."

Today's anarchist-led puppet renaissance might bear the nearest comparison to the Anarchists' Balls. Puppets were the center of attention in the Philadelphia Full-on Festival in 1998, in which the principle organizers were anarchists. The thing was an enormous success and drew much attention, but it had come after many years of steadily increasing theater and puppet culture in the city, including the Big Mess cabaret. The Bleeding Heart Collective (later Spiral Q) had pumped joy and confidence into the hearts of the local community. Puppets have become so effective in public demonstrations that the police have begun to target the puppet-makers themselves, as we observed on August 2nd, 2000 when Philadelphia's SWAT team

raided a studio on Haverford Avenue during the Republican National Convention.

The right guest lecturer will plough new nourishment into an already fertile field. Such was my own experience over the years when we would hold lecture events in a series modeled on that of the LLL at West Philly's A Space in the early 1990's. The Voltairine de Cleyre Lecture Series ran for about four years, presenting some fifty events. There were speakers, video screenings, poetry readings, and sometimes art exhibitions or performances relating to the theme of the evening. We hosted many historians of anarchism, including Nunzio Pernicone and Temma Kaplan; we drew inspiration from contemporary fighters like Ramona Africa and Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin; we listened to the memories of elders like the anarchists Sid and Clara Solomon, and Spanish War veteran Sam Spiller. A Flamenco dance performance by Thom Dura beautifully complemented a display of Spanish anarchist watercolors made in 1936. Long before the A Space came into being, the Wooden Shoe Books had a regularized lecture series in the late 1970's which included evenings with Paul Avrich and Esther Dolgoff.

In recent years, speakers have been invited by the Philadelphia anarchists on an occasional basis. While the movement still thrives here, the lack of a monthly line-up leaves one searching for the rhythmic pulsation we once enjoyed. In other areas, such as the bookstore, the scene has been considerably amplified.

The way which other 19th Century movements collaborated with anarchists is similar to the way

many kinds of social reformers will gather in support of US political prisoners in our own day, or against global business conspiracies like the IMF and the WTO, and hold panel discussions on such issues. Membership of organizations may overlap and events along with them, but the atmosphere of anarchist organizing carries the day with spontaneity and originality, so that the name of the movement is assumed, but often not used by participants.

The intellectual weight carried by the anarchist movement in the 19th Century was not confined to Philadelphia. The greatest geographer of that century of exploration, Elisee Reclus, made it known constantly for forty years that his hope for human freedom was in anarchy. His name was not alone in its permanent distinction: the movement, in which he was at home, was a large community of creative, flourishing minds. As the decades passed into the mid-20th Century, however, that momentum was not sustained. There were pockets of strong anarchist culture, but the life of the planet had stepped around us. As I write, anarchism is seeing a very clear revival all over the world, but the high standards of expectation we once knew have not been achieved again. Wing-nuts are able to step into the limelight with sensational or irrelevant rhetoric, and conduct which is patently mediocre often passes as the best we can do. When anarchists take responsibility and challenge the status quo, they are put on the defensive and sometimes attacked as "authoritarian thugs." Decisive leadership is still lacking, even when newer, more complex projects emerge and build on what we've already accomplished,

as has been the case in recent years. Those who are willfully committed to mediocrity and the sloppy handling of group resources need to be personally and firmly confronted before improvement is possible and standards can be raised. I keep telling myself this whenever someone starts going on about how we'll eventually manage to beat the capitalists. It's not a fascistic discipline that we need, but rather a sense of reality as we ask ourselves what it means to be alive and active in the present anarchist renaissance. This is no time to be endlessly patient with each other's obvious faults. It's



Cover of the program book for the 1993 Philadelphia Anarchist Conference

time for each of us to do, for the movement, whatever we do well.

Anarchists in Philadelphia and everywhere can hardly fail to be hopeful for the movement, in spite of its internal problems, just as we can look back with pride at the comrades who lived before us. As George Brown put it to a friend, after a successful event at the Broad Street Theater in 1914,

*We have every reason
for feeling happy over this.
We've had everything to do
with bringing this large audi-
ence together. It's a long story
from the old days to today—
from the time we used to
have our little meetings in
dirty rooms in out-of-the-way
streets. We've helped fight
this fight—you have, so have
I and there's no vanity in sup-
posing that for us this thing
would never have happened.*

Suggestions for related historical readings:

Voltairine de Cleyre, *The Past & Future of the Ladies' Liberal League*, in *The Rebel* (Boston) Oct. & Nov., 1895

Joseph J. Cohen, *The Jewish Anarchist Movement in the United States*. Philadelphia: 1945 (In Yiddish; unpublished English translation by Esther Dolgoff).

Paul Avrich, *An American Anarchist: The Life of Voltairine de Cleyre*. Princeton: 1978

Boris Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality: The Story of the Anarchist Red Cross*. Chicago: 1958

Harry Boonin, *The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia: a history and guide, 1881–1930*. Philadelphia: 1999

Regular announcements and reports of the anarchist activities in Philadelphia and many cities appear in *The Firebrand* (Portland, 1895–1897), *Free Society* (Chicago, etc. 1897–1904), *The Demonstrator* (1903–1908), and *Mother Earth* (New York, 1906–1918), and other anarchist newspapers.



For anarchy to succeed or simply advance towards its success, it must be conceived not only as a lighthouse which illuminates and attracts but as something possible and attainable, not in centuries to come but in a relatively short time and without relying on miracles. Now, we anarchists have much concerned ourselves with the ideal; we have criticized all the moral lies and institutions which corrupt and oppress humanity, and have described, with all the eloquence and poetry each of us possessed, a longed—for harmonious society, based on goodness and on love; but it must be admitted that we have shown very little concern with the ways and means for the achievement of our ideals.

Malatesta 1924